

CHRIST IN GLORY:

AN EXPOSITION

OF PART OF

THE FIRST CHAPTER OF

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN.

BY THE

REV. W. WORTH HOARE, M.A.

INCUMBENT OF ST. PAUL'S, STALYBRIDGE.

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore.
Amen."

"Search the Scriptures;" "they are they which tell you more."

LONDON:

J. H. JACKSON, ISLINGTON GREEN;
SHEELEY'S, FLEET STREET; ANDERSON & SON, MANCHESTER;
NEWLING, LIVERPOOL; OLIPHANT, EDINBURGH;
ROBERTSON, DUBLIN.

M D C C C A L V I I I .

P R E F A C E.

GOD "hath caused all holy Scriptures to be written for our learning," and we are taught by an apostle that it is all "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Impressed with this truth, the object aimed at in the following pages is, to elucidate and give a definite meaning to a passage in Scripture, which has been for the most part either quite passed over, or explained as implying in a general way the dignity and glory of Jesus in heaven. It is hoped that, in what follows, it may be shown, for the edification and comfort of the church, that not only in a general manner, but in specific and particular points, the dignity and glory of the Son of man, now at the right of the Majesty on high, are distinctly indicated by the facts recorded in the passage to which reference is made, as well as, also, his love and tenderness towards his people.

Should we be successful in this object, then it will appear that, in place of vague and not very

manifest figures of the majesty of Christ in glory, we shall find that each particular emblem here employed has a distinct and manifest signification. Each will appear full of meaning, and, as recorded, not without important design. Each particular mentioned will be found to relate to some of the special dignities conferred upon the "man Christ Jesus;" while the whole united will express the fulness of his glory to his church, as her great office-bearer—her PROPHET, PRIEST, and KING. Thus considered, we shall find here that, according to that remarkable *triplicity** which is to be observed in the word of God, three emblems are given to represent each of the threefold offices of Christ in glory:—with three he is marked as our Prophet; with three he is marked as our Priest; and with the like number he is distinguished to be our King.

This will not be an unimportant inquiry. Indeed, no inquiry can be which attempts to open any portion of revelation, especially if it aims at discovering to us anything illustrative, explanatory, or confirmatory of the dignity of Immanuel, who is exalted to be our "Prince and Saviour." Now, all this dignity of Christ is comprised in his offices as Prophet, Priest, and King of men; so that, if we find him

* There is an interesting and learned work upon *Triplexity*, (published by Hamilton and Adams in 1740,) which is well worthy of attention.

here distinctly and instructively marked to hold these offices, we shall have arrived at some profitable spiritual learning as to the dignity and the blessings which flow to us from Christ in glory.

We may add that, if we are here instructed as to the glory of Christ, we may, also and in consequence, learn our calling, our duties, and our comforts. Whatever Christ is, to that dignity it is his gracious purpose to exalt his people. Called thus to partake of his glory, we are taught that it is our duty to walk worthy of this our "high calling," being followers of Christ "as dear children." To assist us to live thus, our comfort is to know that we may confidently seek for his truth to guide us, his atonement to save us, and his power to uphold us. Supported by his power we shall overcome temptations and sorrows, imitate his righteousness, and walk in the light of his truth.

Jesus declares of himself, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me;" that is, "I am the Priest, the Prophet, and the King of men; and by me alone, as such, can they have access to God." He is "the way;" as Priest he acts as our Mediator, and by his all-sufficient sacrifice hath opened for us "a new living way" to God;—He is "the truth;" as Prophet he came into the world to "bear witness to the truth," and the revelation of God in the Gospel is, "the truth."

as it is in Jesus;”—He is “the life:” as King he hath power to give and take away life, for he is emphatically “the Prince of Life.” In these three offices, then, we shall endeavour to show that Jesus is manifested to us in the passage we are about to consider; and that, therefore, it reveals to us the only way for sinners to come to God. If we succeed, a clearer light may be cast on this portion of the word, and some instruction and comfort, perhaps, be gathered by some of the people of God. May God, the Spirit, grant that our observations may be true and useful! If so, all the praise be to Him! Reader, pray that what here written aright may be blessed by the Spirit to you, falling like good seed in a prepared soil!

March, 1848.

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THE REVELATION

OF

C H R I S T · I N · G L O R Y.

INTRODUCTION.

THE book of the Revelation must, as its very title signifies, contain in it matters of the greatest importance to the church; and to assist, in however small degree, to unfold them, is the duty of all, especially of the stewards of the household of faith. It bears its title in its opening words: it is "The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass." It is, therefore, the making known to the church of events which God has determined shall take place; in other words, it is history foretold. It moreover opens to us a glimpse into heaven,—showing us Christ in glory, and his work ever since his ascension, and which he shall continue to perform until his second coming. It is the revelation to us of Jesus Christ within the veil, now appearing in the presence of God for us as

the great Head of his Church,—our Prophet, Priest, and King. It is the gospel of Christ in glory, as the evangelists give us the gospel of his humiliation. Elder prophecies foretold especially what Christ should do and suffer at his first coming; the four Gospels record how all these predictions were fulfilled; in this book we see how the Lamb that was slain is now rewarded, and what he is now doing for us, as well as what he shall do until the mystery of God is finished, and the glorious consummation given to his work, by the kingdom's of this world becoming “the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ: and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Thus the great object of this, as of all other parts of Scripture, is to reveal Christ unto us, for it is his revelation.

In this opening verse we are to contemplate our Saviour as the great prophet, or teacher, of his church; or, as he is elsewhere called, “The Word of God,” through whom the Father speaks to us in “these last days.” Hence it is said, that God gave this revelation to Jesus Christ, in order that he might show it to his servants. As God, the Son must have known all things; but as man, and the prophet of his church, he only knew as the Father taught him. Thus he says, speaking of his own return in glory, “Of that day and that hour knoweth no man; ne, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the

Son; but the Father."* Acting here in this office, he receives from God this revelation of his wise and glorious purposes, in order to communicate them unto us; and John, the beloved disciple, was the human instrument through which this revelation was conveyed to the church.

Although this opening alone might well claim the attention of the church to the subjects herein unfolded, yet we find, in order that it may obtain the more particular regard from us, that a special blessing is pronounced, in the third verse, upon those who bestow upon it the study it deserves: "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein; for the time is at hand." And as it opens with this encouragement to study its contents, so it concludes, our blessed Lord declaring, "Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book," (chap. xxii. 7;) and again, in the tenth verse of the same chapter, any attempt to close it from the study of the Christian is forbidden, saying, "Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book; for the time is at hand."

Encouraged thus, we would enter upon the consideration of a part of this blessed book; and Reader! unite in supplicating that the blessing here pro-

* Mark xiii. 32.

nounced may render useful to you what shall be written. May we be enabled by the Spirit to draw water out of this well of salvation; may we learn something more of the excellency and fulness of Christ, beholding him not less now than when on earth, working "for us men and our salvation;" and as this book reveals him to our minds, may he also be revealed in our hearts, "the hope of glory!"

John addresses his work, according to the Divine direction given in the eleventh verse, to the seven churches in Asia. He desires for them, in the first place, "grace and peace" from the holy Trinity, (verses 4 and 5.) These blessings are those usually desired by the apostles in their letters to the various churches they address, and they are immediately connected one with the other. The grace of God, which brings salvation, gives peace through the blood of Christ, applied through the Holy Spirit. The apostle here gives particular titles to each person of the Godhead, and places their names in an order somewhat different from that in which they are usually placed. The title which he gives the Father is a paraphrase of the name Jehovah; and the same title he also gives to the Son in the eighth verse of this chapter.

The Holy Spirit is placed next, and is entitled "the seven spirits which are before the throne." A similar expression is used in the first verse of the

third chapter, as also in the description of the opened heaven which the apostle saw, and gives us an account of in the fourth chapter, where, in the fifth verse, he records the vision of "Seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." Again, under the same title, in the sixth verse of the fifth chapter, we find Jesus represented as possessed of the Spirit in its fulness. It is evident that by this title the third person of the blessed Trinity is intended, the number seven being here, as we shall see it is frequently in this book, used as a full and perfect number, or as a number indicating perfection. The place in which this title is here found, between that of the Father and of the Son, as well as the fact that the apostle addressed his prayer for the churches to these seven spirits along with the Father and the Son, sufficiently prove that this expression is a designation of the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit is God.

In the third place, we have the Son addressed and described as "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." Here is his official title, Christ, which tells how God had anointed him to be to us our priest, prophet, and king; here is his name Jesus, which assures us that he hath, as priest and sacrifice, saved us from our sins; here he is also described as "the Faithful Witness," who came to teach

us, declaring, "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." Further, he is called "the First-begotten from the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." He was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead :" at this event it was that, as we learn in the thirteenth of Acts and the thirty-third verse, God addressed the Son in the language of the second Psalm and seventh verse, saying, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," and then proceeded to constitute him his "First-born, higher than the kings of the earth," even "the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords."

In this supplication, with which the apostle opens his address to the seven churches, we have then the doctrine of the Trinity, of three co-eternal and co-equal persons in the unity of the Godhead, clearly taught, inasmuch as the apostle addresses prayer to each, uniting them in this solemn act of worship. Hence, therefore, we have authority for that beautiful and solemn supplication to each of these Divine persons, in particular and in unity, with which our spiritual and sublime Litany commences. And we may observe, that there is hardly any other book of Scripture in which the doctrine of the Trinity, and especially the divinity of the second person in the

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Godhead, is more clearly taught than in this book of the Revelation of Him and His glory.

From prayer the apostle breaks forth into praise, and his language here is so extremely characteristic as sufficiently to identify the writer:—"Unto him that hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen!" Here the two great truths which this apostle delights to dwell upon, the Divine love, and the atonement as its result and proof, are made the ground of his praise. Thus, also, the whole company of the redeemed are represented as throughout eternity praising Christ for these things, and saying, "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." And again,

Loud as from numbers without number,

Sweet as from blessed voices uttering joy,

the apostle heard a loud voice, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I

saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."*

Thus, the love that caused redemption, and the price with which it was effected,—themes this beloved disciple delighted to dwell upon,—shall constitute the endless study and inexhaustible subject of praise to the blood-bought multitudes in glory. Reader! to join this choir above, our harps must be tuned on earth. Have you, then, known this love of God, and found the atonement precious to your soul? Has the message, that "God is love," been a "joyful sound" to your hearts? And has the fact, that God has "sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins," proved to you that love? And is Jesus and his blood your "peace and joy?" *Here* we must begin to know, and love, and praise our God, or else we cannot join the triumphant company in glory.

The apostle, filled with love to Christ and joyful anticipation of the glory of the Saviour's second coming, which he had in vision beheld, and the account of which vision he was now about to write for the church's instruction and consolation, turns aside to declare, "Behold he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen!"

He to whom the apostle gave praise, and whose triumphant return he thus announces, now speaks himself, declaring his own title: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty." There can be no doubt that this title, implying in the most forcible terms the true Godhead of him to whom it belongs, is here claimed by Jesus Christ. He undoubtedly speaks in the eleventh and in the seventeenth verses of this chapter, and takes to himself the same title—Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. So also in the twenty-first chapter and the sixth verse, and the last chapter and the thirteenth verse, Jesus entitles himself again with similar expressions of eternity—of existence from everlasting to everlasting. He alone is the Jehovah that *is to come*. No words could be devised to express more strongly the eternal power and Godhead of our Saviour. He is able, therefore, to save and bless his people, and to bring to pass all his promises; and he is able also to punish his enemies, and to accomplish all his threatenings.

Having thus, in terms suitable to the divine grandeur of the visions that are to follow, opened his work, the apostle now alludes to himself, the human instrument through whom this revelation was conveyed to us. He describes his circumstances and place, saying that he, our "brother and companion

in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.” His present condition was one of tribulation, yet animated by hope of the glory that awaits believers at the second coming of Jesus Christ. In these things he calls himself our brother and companion, instructing us that, we too must “endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ,” animated by the end that is set before us, even a part in the glorious kingdom of our Redeemer. At the time that John had this revelation given him, he was in the Isle of Patmos in the Aegean Sea, on account of his faithful attachment to the religion of Jesus, having been banished there by the Emperor Domitian about the year 95, and, as is generally believed, continued there in exile about one year, after which he returned to Ephesus. It was during this his solitude in Patmos that God vouchsafed to him this glorious revelation. And thus oft-times when God deprives his people of temporal blessings, it is to make more room for, and more fully to manifest himself in their souls. So it was when Jacob went forth a wanderer from his father’s house, and had the earth for his bed and a stone for his pillow, that there was vouchsafed to him that remarkable vision of God incarnate, heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending, which made the place

Beth-el to him.* Let this be a comfort to the believer in his hours of trial, under the loss of friends, and creature-comforts or support; God takes away what we prize to make more room for himself in our hearts, and he will, with the revelation of himself, "satiate the weary soul, and replenish every sorrowful soul."† And has not each Christian in his own experience, found that it was good for him to have been troubled? Is it not when the creature fails and leaves us, that God is found "the friend formed for adversity," "a very present help in trouble?" It is when we are, as it were, in Patmos, left alone of the creature, that God in Christ especially manifests himself unto us, and takes up his abode with us.

The particular time when this revelation was given to St. John is worthy of our notice. We learn in the tenth verse that it was upon the "Lord's day;"—the apostle says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day;" and then he heard "a great voice, as of a trumpet," addressing him. The "Lord's day" is the Christian sabbath; the first day of the week; the day which Jesus, by rising from the dead and appearing to his disciples, and sending forth the Spirit, has made sacred to his church. The apostle was on this day "in the Spirit," that is, engaged in spiritual things, under the

* Gen. xxviii. 11—19.

† Jer. xxxi. 25.

gracious influences of the Holy Ghost—his heart and thoughts above the world. Thus he was engaged, this was his frame of mind, when Jesus appeared to him and gave him this wondrous revelation.

Here, Reader, let us learn to devote the first day of the week to the especial service of God; and this even if, as was the case with the apostle, we are, by the arrangements of God's providence, deprived of the public means of grace, and not permitted to assemble where the presence of Jesus is peculiarly promised. Of this we may be certain, that he who cuts us off for a time from the congregation of his people, both can and will, if we wait upon him, supply abundantly the loss by his presence and revelation to us. Again, we may hence learn, that it is when waiting upon him in the means he has appointed, we may expect spiritual blessings from him. But, observe that all forms and outward attendance must be vain, unless the Spirit gives life. For the Spirit to quicken us, therefore, let us ever pray, so that in waiting upon God in the means of his appointment, we may worship in spirit and in truth; and go not only "to the altar of God" but "to God,"* and thus be strengthened and built up in our holy faith, and go upon our way rejoicing.

Jesus claiming, as we have seen, the attribute of Deity, directed John to write in a book what was about

* Ps. xlivi. 4.

to be revealed to him, and to send it to the seven churches in Asia. Again, in the nineteenth verse, he is directed, saying, "Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter." Here are several points that demand our notice. Observe first, the command to write what was about to be revealed, and to send the writing to the churches. Here is shown us God's gracious care, that what he has seen fit to reveal should not be confined to any one man, or class of men, nor be lost to succeeding ages, inasmuch as it is necessary for the instruction and comfort of all his people, and to the end of the world. Had these things not been written, then, either they must have been lost with the death of the apostle, or been handed down through some particular class in the uncertain and untrustworthy form of oral tradition; in which case, they would have been the same as lost to the church. But God has been more gracious than to leave the important contents of this book to such a means of transmission; and as he would have his people know and study it, he has commanded it to be written, and thus made known unto them. That this was intended by the command to write, will appear still more evident if we turn to the tenth chapter of this book, where we read in the fourth verse, that when John was about to write the utterances of the seven thunders, he heard a voice from

heaven, saying unto him, "Seal up those things which the seven thunders uttered, and write them not." Here, to seal up from the church the things he had heard, is tantamount to not writing them. It is the Scriptures, or written word, that testify of Jesus. They "are written, that we might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, we might have life through his name."^{*} And hence St. Paul declares, that the holy Scriptures are "able to make wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus," as well as "thoroughly to furnish unto all good works." Hence we see how far from truth are those, whether nominal Protestants or open Romanists, who exalt unwritten tradition to at least a level with, if not to an authority superior to the written word.

What the apostle was to write he was to address to the seven churches in Asia Minor, namely, in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and in Laodicea. These churches then actually flourished; but, doubtless, they stand here as examples to, and emblems of the church universal in all ages. In the second and third chapters we find an epistle addressed by our Saviour to each of these churches in particular; these all commence with allusion to the actual state of each church at the time present, but they all, it is remarkable, terminate with the end

* John xx. 31.

of the present age,—the coming of Jesus in glory. Hence, while there is evident reference in them to the particular state of the then seven Asiatic churches, it is evident, also, that they refer to the church universal until the end. They are not to be confined to those churches in Asia, neither are they to be read as giving us a successive history of the church in different ages ; but as describing the condition of the church of Christ in every age until Christ's return. These seven churches, as a perfect number, stand here for the universal church in all times ; in some part, or members of which, are to be found always some characters and circumstances corresponding with, and to be encouraged or warned by, the state of these seven actual churches. Hence, in fact, these seven epistles may be viewed as one epistle, addressed by Jesus Christ to his one church, and describing its mixed condition, and the dangers, temptations, and struggles it has to endure, as well as its encouragements and helps, until the arrival of her great Judge, Purifier, and King. We are therefore to use for our instruction these seven epistles just as we are to use the epistle to the Romans, the Corinthians, or any other epistle in sacred Scripture, as written for our learning and admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. We shall, both as a church and as individuals, use them aright if we examine ourselves by them, practising what they enjoin, shunning what

they condemn, being warned by their threatenings, and animated by the hope they set before us.

We find stated here the subjects of which the apostle was to write. They are divided into three parts: firstly, "the things thou hast seen;" secondly, "the things which are;" and thirdly, "the things which shall be hereafter." The last of these occupies the greatest portion of this book, which is eminently the prophetical book of the New Testament. There are, indeed, prophecies in other books of the New Testament, as our Lord's in the Gospels; but this book is especially occupied with an unfolding of "things to come." From the commencement of the sixth chapter to the end of the book, it is the revelation of "things which shall be hereafter;" and most, if not all, of which, are even in our days unfulfilled. This latter portion is full of the deep things of God; and, predicting as it does things yet to come, there must be, of necessity, a great degree of obscurity over it; for prophecy was never given to make us prophets by predicting times, and seasons, and dates, but to warn us; and so that after they are fulfilled, "they might be interpreted by the event, and God's own providence, not the interpreter's; be then manifested thereby to the world. For the event of things, predicted many ages before, will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by providence. The event will prove the

Apocalypse ; and this prophecy, thus proved and understood, will open the old prophets ; and all together will make known the true religion, and establish it." *

But though, until the event, these foretold facts cannot be clearly understood, yet are they "written for our learning," and should obtain from the church more, much more attention, than that small measure which is usually given to them ; for we have seen that a blessing is pronounced on those who read and obey this whole book. We should read this latter portion of it, as the devout Israelite before the first coming of the Saviour, must have read the prophecies in the Old Testament which predict the wonderful events of that advent. How this was, the apostle St. Peter informs us in the first chapter of his first epistle, in the tenth and two following verses. Speaking of the salvation of our souls, he says, " Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the

gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent, down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into." And as here we have the manner in which they "of old" studied unfulfilled prophecy, so we have an example of the effect of this study on those "holy men," in the case of Simeon, as mentioned in the second chapter of St. Luke's gospel. We read there, in the twenty-fifth verse, that he was "a just and devout" man, and "waiting," or looking for, "the consolation of Israel;" that is, looking for the fulfilment of prophecy by the birth of the Saviour. Even so should we now study unfulfilled prophecy ; making no vain attempts to lay down dogmatically by whom, or when it shall be accomplished, but so attending to it as to "a light which shineth in a dark place," in order that we may be found watchful, and, like Simeon of old, "looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God."

"It must, indeed, be evident that the study of this, and of every other prophetic Scripture, is our duty ; for, were it otherwise, God would not have revealed it to his servants, and have, as in this book, so especially charged us to attend to it. If "the secret things belong unto the Lord our God," it is equally true that "those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law."* If, then, we must not attempt to be

* Deut. xxix. 29.

wise above what is written, yet it is our solemn duty to endeavour to be wise to the full extent that is revealed. It is as much our duty to inquire after the meaning of the seven seals, the seven trumpets, and the seven vials, as it is not to endeavour to discover the utterances of the seven thunders.

This book of the Revelation, as a prophecy, forms, as it were, a connecting link between the Old Testament and the New; and it may be considered especially as an enlargement and continuation of the prophecy of Daniel, in connection with which, therefore, it should be read. Indeed, it is by the light of other scriptures that we shall always move most safely through prophecy. This is the meaning of the canon of interpretation which St. Peter has laid down for us in the first chapter of his second epistle, and to which, if we desire to understand God's word, it becomes us to pay particular attention. In the nineteenth verse of that chapter the apostle teaches us, that it is our duty to "take heed" to the prophetic Scriptures, "as unto a light that shineth in a dark place;" and then, in the next verse adds, "knowing this first"—that is, have this truth fixed in our minds in the study of prophecy, as the only safe method of arriving at its meaning,—"that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation;"—that is, no prophecy of the Scripture is its own interpreter, or can be understood if taken by itself. Here, in a

negative form, we have conveyed to us a positive rule, amounting to this,—that prophetic Scripture is to be best understood by comparing it with other parts of Scripture; not by taking one passage or book by itself, but by taking the word of God as a whole, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual. “Thus acting,” to use the language of Bishop Horsley, “the pious though unlearned Christian may succeed in the application of the apostle’s rule; so far, at least, as to derive much rational amusement, much real edification, much consolation, much confirmation of his faith, much animation of his hopes, much joy and peace in believing, from such heedful meditation on the prophetic word which an inspired apostle hath enjoined.” This being the great method and rule for understanding prophecy, it is evident that a Bible well furnished with good references, will oftentimes be the best commentary.

Learning has indeed often “darkened counsel” in endeavouring to lay down systematic expositions of the prophecy of this book; and doubtless we shall most profit by it if, comparing it with, and seeking to understand it by other portions of the word of God, we are warned from it to stand ever with our “loins girt about, and our lights burning,” like servants waiting for their Lord; and have learned to join with St. John, in reply to its closing announcement, “Surely

I come quickly," and say, "Even so, come Lord Jesus."

We shall then best arrive at some understanding of this book in all its parts, if we read it with prayer, and by the light of other parts of God's word, which do mutually explain and are explained by it; even as the moon casts light upon the earth, and, in its turn, receives reflected light from the earth. The other books of Scripture which will chiefly assist the Christian to understand this book of the Revelation, are, Exodus, Daniel, and Zechariah. The first of these will assist us much to understand various figures and emblems employed in it. The prophecy of Daniel has always been looked upon as in many respects parallel with the Revelation given to us through St. John; even as the former was among the Old Testament saints like John among the New, the prophet, the "man greatly beloved," the disciple—he "whom Jesus loved." The prophecy of Zechariah is both parallel in matter, and assists to explain the emblems of this book. It is, therefore, to these three books we shall chiefly refer in the following attempt to elucidate a portion of this Revelation given to St. John.

But the apostle was to write not only of the things that were afterward to take place, he was also to record "the things which are." By these words he was evidently directed to write the actual

state of heavenly things, as he should behold them in “the visions of God.” These things are contained especially in the fourth and fifth chapters, which record that, to the apostle “a door was opened in heaven,” whereby he saw the present glories of each person of the ever-blessed Trinity, and heard the adoring songs of the redeemed and the angelic hosts, and then and there he was shown “the things which must be hereafter.”

The apostle was to write also of another subject, namely, the things which he had already seen. “Write the things which thou hast seen.” (Ver. 19.) These, as well as those things which he records in the fourth and fifth chapters, as “the things which are,” are therefore not strictly prophetic subjects; and there can be no doubt or difficulty as to how we should act in regard to them, although there is much neglect of our duty towards them, as there is in reference to the remainder and strictly prophetical portion of this book. Under these heads are recorded for our learning, the actual state of heavenly things, and of Christ in glory, as seen by the apostle; and he thus opens even to us “a door in heaven,” whereby we too may see the glories of our Saviour, and catch and re-echo the songs of the ransomed. This portion of the Revelation at least we should study, and if we neglect it we shall much injure ourselves. Guided by it,—

Into the heaven of heavens we may presume,
Though earthly guests, and draw empyreal air.

The portion of this book which it is intended to consider in the following pages is but a small one; yet seeing that the apostle was especially charged to write it, we cannot doubt but that it is important. Our subject is to be the first division given in the ninetenth verse, where it is said, "Write the things which thou hast seen." These are here distinguished from what he was to see, whether those should be things then existing, or representations of things to be hereafter. Now these things which he had seen when this command to write them was given, are recorded in the verses commencing at the twelfth, and are as follow:—

REVELATION I. 12—18.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle. His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged

sword : and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. . And when I saw 'him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death."

May the Spirit of God enable us to derive from them profitable instruction !

THE CHURCH.

"And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks."—Verse 12.

THE apostle had heard a mighty voice, claiming for the speaker the attributes of omnipotence, and commanding him to write to the seven churches in Asia the visions he was about to behold. The introduction is grand and impressive. The apostle, rapt in spiritual meditation in an uninhabited island, amidst the lone and "melancholy main," heard a great voice, like a trumpet, startle his ear, declaring the presence of Jehovah. Thus we may be reminded that his presence fills heaven and earth, and that, however deserted his people may feel, God is with them, a very present help, and witness of their trials. But let it also serve to remind us, that we can never hide ourselves from the presence of God. In the lonely island, in the waste wilderness, and in the busy haunts of men, "Thou, God, seest me" should be impressed upon our souls; and let us inquire

whether we have looked after Him who seeth us?* Here, therefore, there is a lesson of comfort and guidance for the Christian ; God is present with you, therefore fear not—God is present, therefore act as in his sight.

But let us particularly notice the objects which first attracted the apostle's attention : he saw “seven golden candlesticks.” We cannot be at any loss as to the meaning of these symbols, for our blessed Saviour himself gives us the explanation of them in the last verse of this chapter, where we read—“The mystery of the seven golden candlesticks . . . the seven candlesticks which thou sawest are the seven churches.” These candlesticks, therefore, represented the seven churches; but here, as elsewhere in this book, seven is employed to signify fulness, completeness, or perfection ; so that we are to take these seven churches as standing for the universal church of Christ in every age ; and, consequently, the seven golden candlesticks as the emblems of this universal church,—“the church militant here on earth.”

As the meaning of these candlesticks is thus evident, let us now endeavour to ascertain the particular instruction intended to be conveyed to us, by the use of such an emblem as the figure of Christ's church. In endeavouring to do this, we shall refer to two of those other books of Scripture which, we have said,

* Gen. xvi. 13.

will much help us to understand this revelation of Jesus Christ,—Exodus and Zechariah,—in both of which the same figure is employed.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Exodus, from the thirty-first to the fortieth verse, we read the command given to Moses to make a seven-branched golden candlestick,—“Thou shalt make a candlestick of pure gold: of beaten work shall the candlestick be made: his shaft, and his branches, his bowls, his knobs, and his flowers, shall be of the same. And six branches shall come out of the sides of it; three branches of the candlestick out of the one side, and three branches of the candlestick out of the other side:” then, after other particulars have been specified, it is added, “all of it shall be one beaten work of pure gold. And thou shalt make the seven lamps thereof: and they shall light the lamps thereof, that they may give light over against it.” Again: “Of a talent of pure gold shall he make it, with all these vessels. And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.”

In the remarkable vision of Zechariah, he beheld a figure corresponding to this candlestick of Moses, and to that seen by St. John. He records, in the fourth chapter of his prophecy, in the first and second verses, that the angel who spake to him came and wakened him out of his sleep, and said unto him, “What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a can-

dlestic all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof."

Our Lord Jesus also appears to refer to this figure, and to explain it, when he says to his disciples, "Ye are the light of the world . . . Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick ; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."* So, also, St. Paul writes to believers : " Be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world ; holding forth the word of life."†

Assisted by these scriptures, we may learn the following particulars as to the church's position, character, and duties, from the emblem under our consideration :

1. The first lesson we may learn hence is, the position which the church of Christ now occupies in the world. It is evident that this church fills now the position which Israel filled of old, having succeeded to their place, and therefore possessing their privileges, duties, and responsibilities. Instead of there being any opposition between the churches of the Old and of the New Testament, there is a close union and

Matt. v. 14—16.

† Phil. ii. 15, 16.

parallel: our position is similar, our duties are the same, and our hopes and fears are alike. All this is taught us very clearly in many parts of Scripture. When our Saviour compares the rejection of the Jews and the call of the Gentiles to the transfer of a vineyard from one set of husbandmen to another,* we are taught these truths. In the eleventh chapter of the epistle to the Romans we have these facts impressed, as most important, upon our attention. Israel is compared to a branch now broken off, and the Gentiles as grafted into their place; whence we are to learn the duty of lowliness of mind, and God's goodness towards us; while, also, we are to recollect that, the branch now broken off shall, in due time, be once more grafted in with us.† In the tenth chapter of the first epistle to the Corinthians, the apostle, as a very momentous matter, teaches us these truths when he tells us that, the Israelites were our fathers, and that what occurred to them is recorded "for our admonition;" "wherefore," he adds, "let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall."‡ ●

But besides this important practical use to be derived from our position as the "Israel of God," it is of no small consequence as assisting us to understand and use aright the Scriptures, and especially the epistles. These latter are, for the most part, addressed to Christians on their profession, as "called

* Matt. xxi. 33—43. † Rom. xi. 16—32. ‡ 1 Cor. x. 1—12.

to be saints"—“ holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling.” As a baptized people the church is God’s visible election, just as of old Israel, as a circumcised people, was that election. Hence, a similar figure here stands for the Gentile church, as of old typified the church of the Israelites.

But while the figure has a remarkable similarity, we must also observe a remarkable difference, which serves to point out the grand distinction between the churches of the old and new dispensations. The figure used under the old was one candlestick with seven branches ; that employed here is seven distinct candlesticks. Thus the church of Israel was one—complete in itself, confined to one nation ; but the Christian church has its completeness in its catholicity, or, in other words, in its extension throughout all nations. The former is seven in one, the latter one in seven ; the one unity in contraction, the other unity in expansion ; the former, one national church in one nation ; the latter many churches in many nations : yet unity is preserved in the latter, even in a more glorious manner than in the former, for the unity of old was in ordinances—the unity of Christianity is in Christ. In him, national churches, who hold to him as the head, have unity with him, and, therefore, with one another. This unity of distinct churches is strikingly pointed out in the passage before us. If the emblem used for the church of

Christ is seven distinct candlesticks, signifying its necessary separation into churches in various nations, yet their glorious unity in Christ is shown when it is said, that in the “midst of the seven candlesticks” was “one like unto the Son of man;” and still more strongly the preservation of unity in Christ is pointed out in the first verse of the second chapter, where Christ describes himself as holding “the seven stars in his right hand,” and *walking in the midst of the seven candlesticks.* Christ in his churches is their point of unity : he walketh in the midst of them, and thus keeps them one in him. Wherever Christ is, there is unity in him with “all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours.”* But Christ is wherever his sacraments are duly administered, and he is preached as the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people. “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them,” is the promise given by Him, who also has said to his people, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.”

We may observe that this figure thus considered, teaches us the opposite of the dogma of the Romish Church, which claims to be the one only church, and the Pope as its centre of unity. The Romish Church in most points Judaizes, and she does so here, attempting to make the candlesticks one in

substance with seven branches, instead of, as in Scripture, seven candlesticks, one in Christ. In these days, when the plausibilities of Rome, and its cunning adaptation to fallen man's natural propensities entice so many, it may be of use, in any particular, to point out the anti-scriptural tendency of its claims and doctrines. None is more plausible than this of visible unity, made to centre in the pope; but nothing is more anti-scriptural, and nothing really so injurious to Christ. The pope in such a claim, usurps Christ's office and brings back the church to the "elements of world." Let us rejoice in our head, even Christ, and our unity in him, and let us be "rooted and built up in him."

2. From the figure under our consideration we learn the object of a church: it is to be an instrument for holding a light. Here we may perceive, therefore, the importance of creeds and forms of religion, which, indeed, may also be learned from experience. To be a candlestick fit to hold the light, it is absolutely necessary that there should be something solid, some fixed form. However pure the faith of individuals may be, yet no body of persons can, without fixed forms, be as a candlestick holding and giving forth light. On the other hand, a church like ours, possessed of fixed creed and form, let individuals in her fall however low, is yet still a witness—a candlestick holding and giving forth a

fixed and unwavering light. The one may be likened to a light held by some friendly hand to guide the ship into the port—sufficient when all is calm; the other is like the rock-founded lighthouse—steadily shining in storm as well as calm. Let us be grateful for the blessing of being members of such a church, and render thanks to God for the unspeakable advantage of an established and fixed faith in agreement with his holy word. And let us also beware lest, if we become careless and unthankful, our candlestick, as is threatened to the Ephesian church,* be removed out of its place, and we be left in darkness.

3. But we may further learn, that, however excellent a church may be in creed and forms, it will have but a name to live, unless the Spirit gives it life and light. The church is but a candlestick, and therefore comparatively useless to its object without a light. The oil of the Spirit must be supplied, and He who holds the stars must make them to shine, or the form is vain: it will be only as a corpse, which indeed has the form of a man; but is without life, and hastening to decay. As the figure of a candlestick points out the necessity of sound forms and creeds, and thus rebukes those who reject them, so the end of the formation of the candlestick which is to hold forth light, condemns the Romanist who has a form,

* Rev. ii. 5.

but no spiritual light. While some of the former have indeed the light, but insecure, because not “set upon a candlestick,” the latter have indeed an imperfect, and mutilated, and corroded candlestick ; but they want the light, which they have “hid under a bushel,”—having concealed the Word of God.

4. Important personal lessons may also hence be drawn. Let us observe, in this direction, that the church to which we belong may be excellent and sound, and to be in communion with it may be most right, and a high privilege, yet this will not save us. In God’s sight something more is requisite than mere membership in a sound church, for there are fruitless banches in the vine.* It is easy to take up the lamp of profession ; but the question is, have we “oil in our vessels with our lamps ?”†. Are we ready to meet the Bridegroom at his midnight and glorious advent ? The Romanism of man’s heart is very great, and leads multitudes to trust to a name, supposing that this will save them. But if our hearts be unchanged—if the world is still loved—if we are still ignorant of our own sinfulness, and ignorant of the preciousness of the Saviour—then our church privileges, so far from benefiting us, will only be as weights about our necks, which shall sink us to a deeper depth of woe eternal. Many, alas ! out of the bright light of the Church shall go down to endless night ; many,

now highly privileged, shall say, “Lord, Lord, open unto us ! ” to whom the answer shall be “Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, for I never knew ye ! ” Oh, reader ! let us beware lest we be of this miserable number. Let us endeavour “to walk in the light,” for this is our calling. Christ is the light of the world ; and his church, and each member of it, must be partakers and reflectors of his light. “Shine in the midst of the world, holding forth the word of truth,” is the apostle’s injunction to the Philippian Christians.* “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven,”† is the precept of our blessed Saviour to his disciples. Thus men shall “take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus ;” and as Moses returned from converse with God, shining with the glory he had seen, so let us endeavour to reflect the glory of the Lord “in all holy conversation and godliness,” “adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” That we may do so, we must seek for grace from Him who, as “the bright and morning star,” walketh in the midst of his churches, and who has promised to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. By his spirit, and only by that spirit, shall our light be kept unquenched, and burn brighter and brighter to the end.

5. Let us notice of what material these emblematical candlesticks were made. It is said they were "golden,"—the most precious of metals; and in the corresponding figure in the Old Testament, we read that they were all of gold, and that gold "pure and beaten."* Here, first, we may learn the preciousness of the church, and therefore of each member of it, in God's sight. Gold is among men most precious, and therefore used as the emblem of the value of the church with God. How, indeed, can the church be other than precious in God's sight, for "he has purchased it with his own blood?" It, and each member of it, is the reward of Christ's sufferings,—"the travail of his soul," which shall give him satisfaction; the "goodly heritage," for which he "endured the cross and despised the shame." This is a source of comfort to the Christian's soul. Has Christ shed his blood for me?—then, vile as I am in myself, I am precious in his sight, having been redeemed with his "precious blood;" and he will therefore love me, and keep me to the end. His sheep, for whom he laid down his life, "shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand."† When he "makes up his jewels,"‡ he will count me as of them. Let us thus plead his precious blood-shedding for us, that for it he would count us precious as gold, and keep us to his kingdom.

* Exod. xxv. 31, 36.

† John x.

‡ Mal. iii. 17.

But this gold was pure ; and hereby we learn that the church, and each member of it, must be holy. Holiness becometh the house of God, and “ Christ hath loved the church, and hath given himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing ; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* This is the end of our salvation. Holiness wrought in us, is the pledge and earnest of our having an interest in Christ’s blood.

Further: this gold was not only to be pure, but beaten. Hereby we may learn the benefit, nay, the necessity of afflictions to the church and its members. Beating the gold is the means to fashion it to the object designed by the artificer. So persecutions have purified the church, and made it more adapted to its great end. Thus also, afflictions, trials, and temptations within and without, are needful in order to make, in the “great house” of the church, any individual “a vessel unto honour.”† They to the Christian always “yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness ;” and accordingly our blessed Lord teaches us, in the nineteenth verse of the third chapter of this book, “as many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” “Behold, happy is the man whom God correcteth ;”‡ “for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and

* Eph. v. 25—27. † 2 Tim. ii. 20; 21. ‡ Job v. 17.

scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."* Let us receive, then, all afflictions as the dispensations of a Father, who correcteth his children for their advantage, "that they may be partakers of his holiness." Let us pray that he may bless them to us, and cause them to work for our good.

Before we pass from this subject to consider the great and glorious Being that the apostle beheld amidst the candlesticks, it will be well that we diligently inquire whether we are of the church of Christ in spirit as well as in letter? Are we thankful for our advantages, and endeavouring to bring forth such fruits as shall prove our gratitude? Is Christ our light; and are we endeavouring to shine forth with his light before our fellow-men? Do we endeavour to feel and act as not our own, but bought with a price, even the precious blood of Christ; and are we, in consequence, endeavouring to live as God's servants? Are we aiming at holiness, and, from each providence that occurs to us, studying to derive spiritual profit? If we are such, then we shall come with deep and personal interest to consider the Lord and Shepherd and Bishop of the Church as here set before us; but if otherwise, this subject can have neither profit nor interest to us.

THE SON OF MAN.

“And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man.”—Verse 13.

THE first object noticed by the apostle when he turned to see who it was that spoke to him, was, as we read, the seven candlesticks; and these we have considered as the figure of the church of Christ. Hence we have seen that we may gather instruction as to the position and duty of that church and each member of it, and that we have also its unity implied by the presence of the Son of man amidst the candlesticks; and we are now to turn our attention more especially to this glorious personage thus beheld by the beloved disciple, “walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks.”

. We shall consider, in the first place, who this was that the apostle beheld in this important position, and the title he gives to him; and, then we shall offer some reflections upon the position he is represented as occupying.

First we must inquire who this being, seen by the apostle when he turned to look who had spoken to him, was. It is evident that he was the same person who addressed the apostle with “a great voice as of a trumpet,” and whose address is recorded in the eleventh verse, and who again speaks to him in the seventeenth verse, and to the end of the chapter: but if this be so, then also it will be manifest that this being was our Saviour Jesus Christ in his glorified body, such as he is now at “the right hand of the Majesty on high”—that is, *Jesus Christ in glory*. That this must be Christ will appear if we consider his language in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses. He laid, we there read, his right hand upon the apostle, saying unto him, “Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” Now, there is no other being in heaven or earth that could use such language save Jesus Christ; for, in the first place, observe, that he claims to be Jehovah when he calls himself “the first and the last,”—a title which he declares as his not only in this verse, but in the eleventh, saying, “I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last.” And again; he takes it as his in addressing the Smyrnian Church, in the second chapter and eighth verse, saying, “These things saith the first and the last.” Again in the twenty-first chapter and the sixth verse: “I am

Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end ;" as also in the last chapter and thirteenth verse, where, having declared his speedy return to earth, he adds, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end—the first and the last." But we have the full force of this title, and how certainly it implies the true Deity of the speaker, shown us more clearly still in the eighth verse of the first chapter, where our Saviour speaks for the first time in this book, and declares himself to be "Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come—the Almighty." From the very title itself the Deity of him to whom it belongs is evident, much more so when we find such a paraphrase attached to it as that in this last-cited verse. But if we refer to other books of the Scripture we shall find that this very title is one taken as belonging to Jehovah himself. It will be sufficient to quote one such passage, and that we shall select is contained in the forty-fourth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, and the sixth verse, where we read, "Thus saith JEHOVAH the king of Israel, and his redeemer JEHOVAH God of Hosts ; *I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*"

There cannot be a more satisfactory proof than that here afforded of the divinity of the being who addressed St. John, and whose name, position, and appearance he here records. It is worthy of remark

how this book opens with these plain assertions of the divinity of the being who speaks, and concludes likewise with similar declarations. This alone should claim our deep and reverential attention to its contents.

But if he who addressed St. John in Patmos claims to be Jehovah, we must observe that he also declares himself to be man. This he does when, to re-assure the apostle, he declares he had been dead, and had risen from the dead. As God, it is evident he could not have died; and therefore, as while claiming to be God, he also declares he has died and risen again, we are hereby manifestly taught that this glorious being must have taken upon himself human nature, in it to die, and in it to rise from the dead. But these two natures are united only in "the man Christ Jesus," who was "perfect God and perfect man." He was "God manifest in the flesh," and in the flesh he was put to death,* but "quickened by the spirit," and now, being risen "from the dead, he dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him."†

But if further proof were required to show us that the being here appearing to, and addressing the apostle, was our Saviour, it is furnished by the power which he declares to be his. This power he expresses by saying that he is possessed of the "keys of hell and of death," which, without at present considering

* 1 Pet. iii. 18. •

† Rom. vi. 9.

the particulars of this power, is evidently that which our Lord declares to be his when, after his resurrection, he tells his disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth ;"^{*} and which he implies to be his when, having declared he would establish a church, he added, that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[†]

But it may be asked, can this being, of so splendid a presence, whose glorious appearance had such an effect upon St. John that he "fell at his feet as dead," be the humble Saviour of mankind, whose "visage was marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men ?"[‡] Yes, it is the same; but we must remember that now he appears here to the apostle, not as in the days of his humiliation, but in his state of glory. John had indeed beheld Jesus in such a state, prefiguring this glory, when, as we read in the Gospels, upon the holy mount he was "transfigured, and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light." Vast indeed was the change in the external appearance of our Redeemer; for he who once leaned familiarly upon his bosom now fell down awe-struck at his feet, as though dead; but in character he was unchanged. In this respect he is the same "yesterday, to-day, and for ever." What he was on earth in the days of his humiliation, such is he now in heaven in his

* Matt. xxviii. 18.

† Ib. xvi, 18.

‡ Isa. lii. 14.

glory : merciful, gracious, and condescending. It is a happy thought that our great Redeemer is, in all his glory, as gracious as he is glorious. Through him, therefore, we may have access with boldness into the holiest of all.

In one of those books of the Old Testament which have been mentioned as being most useful to assist us to the understanding of this book, there is a passage remarkably parallel to the one before us. This passage is in the tenth chapter of the book of Daniel. There is, indeed, a remarkable parallel not only between Daniel and John, but also between the subjects of which they prophecy, and the Being through whom their revelations were given to them. As we have before observed, Daniel was "the man greatly beloved," and John was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." The Revelation may well be read as an enlargement and continuation of the book of Daniel ; the same great Being is represented as giving to each his revelation, while each is effected in the same way by that Being's glory, and by him comforted after a similar manner. The prophet Daniel describes this Being by particulars to which we shall have occasion hereafter to refer as agreeing with the subject before us, and calls him by a name similar to that here given to Jesus by St. John. Daniel tells us, that when he beheld the vision vouchsafed to him he was overwhelmed, but that, in order to

comfort and re-assure him, "a hand touched" him, and that "*one like the similitude of the sons of men* touched his lips;" and again,—"there came and touched me *one like the appearance of a man*, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace be unto thee; be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me."* Thus he who spake to and strengthened Daniel is called, "*one like the similitude of the sons of men*;" and again, "*one like the appearance of a man*." And still more according to the title before us, in a previous vision Daniel speaks, saying that he saw "*one like the Son of man*" receiving universal dominion from the "*ancient of days*."[†] Evidently it was therefore the same being who gave to Daniel this vision and comforted him, who here revealed himself to and comforted St. John, and who stood "*in the midst of the seven candlesticks*, like unto the Son of man."

Even if we could not have learned, as we have seen we may most distinctly, who this being was, from what he afterwards calls himself, and from what he is described as doing and saying, this title alone would have proved him to be our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; for to him belongs emphatically the name of "*the Son of man*," as well as "*the Son of*

* Dan. x. 10, 16, 18, 19.

† Ib. vii. 13.

God." By this title, as we have seen, Daniel speaks of him as invested with universal dominion,* and in the Gospels it is frequently claimed by our Lord Jesus;† among other passages in the fifth of St. John and twenty-seventh verses, where, as in the cited passage in Daniel, it is represented as the title connected with, and expressive of his dominion over the world and men. Here in his glory, Christ has this name given him, expressive of this authority and power, and to convey to us impressively, that, though thus exalted, he is still partaker of our nature, has and can feel and have compassion upon our infirmities. Indeed, one great lesson we are taught by the whole appearance of Jesus Christ, in the passage we have under consideration, is this most blessed one,—that, though he has, ascending into heaven, changed his place and condition, his nature and character are still the same. In heaven and in glory, he is still what he was on earth and in humiliation. Bearing this truth in mind, let us turn to the Gospels and the Psalms, and there learning our Saviour's tender and merciful nature, let us hence gain confidence in his goodness now, and approach to him in "the full assurance of faith." We know

* Dan. vii. 13.

† It has been observed that the title of "Son of man" is applied to our blessed Saviour in no less than eighty-two passages of the sacred Scripture.

that he is all-powerful: let this reflection impress upon us that he is all-merciful, and that therefore he is no less willing than he is able to "save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." "The Son of man" he was, when on earth he "had not where to lay his head,"* and "the Son of man" he is now, "in the glory which he had with the Father before the world began."

This name of our Saviour reminds us of that other which is equally his, namely, the title of "the Son of God." There is one passage in which he claims both these titles. In the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew we read that, being adjured to answer whether he was the Son of God, he allows that he was, and goes on also to claim the title of the Son of man. (Verses 63, 64.) Now it is evident, that by the former title his divinity is declared, as when, at his baptism and transfiguration, the voice from heaven declared him to be "the Son of God," and on his resurrection it is said, that he was declared to be the "Son of God with power." On the other hand, by the title of the "Son of man," his humanity is set before us. By this title, so frequently used by our Saviour of himself, our attention is fixed upon him as the promised "seed of the woman"—"the seed of Abraham"—who, when the fulness of time was come, was "made of a woman, made under the law,

* Matt. viii. 20.

to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons."* Hence in these names of our Redeemer, we are taught the blessed truth, that God's eternal Son hath taken upon himself human nature, becoming the Son of man, in order to be the Saviour of mankind.†

* Gal. iv. 4, 5.

† The following extracts from Archbishop Magee on the Atonement, in reference to the titles "Son of God" and "Son of man," are worthy of particular notice :

" Our Lord, in the repeated and emphatical use of the title *Son of God*, had claimed to himself a *Divine nature*; he was understood as doing so by the Jews, who charged him, on the repeated assumption of that title, with *making himself God*, and who finally sentenced him to death for that great offence against their law." . . . " When the Jews assign to Pilate the reason for which our Lord ought to die, what is the charge? Simply, that 'he made himself the Son of God.' What, then, is the sense in which it is declared by the Jews, that our Lord assumed this appellation? Plainly, that of implying what the words directly import, and what on two former occasions they had expressly pronounced them to import,—the *Divine nature* of our Lord. 'We have a law,' they say, 'and by our law he ought to die, because he ~~made himself~~ THE SON OF GOD.' (John xix. 7.) In calling himself THE SON OF GOD, he had been guilty (in their estimation) of an assumption of the Divine nature, which being, in the judgment of the Jews, blasphemy against the Most High, and overturning, as they conceived, the first principle of their religion—the unity of God, they of course pronounced that, according to their law, he ought to die. For this reason, also, the Jews on two former occasions had sought to kill him, when he

The apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, teaches us some of the inestimable benefits and comforts

had merely spoken of himself as THE SON OF GOD : John v. 18, and x. 33. In the first of these, we find the Jews declaring, as the reason why he should be put to death, that he had said 'that God was his Father (*πατέρα ΙΔΙΟΝ*), *making himself equal with God* ;' and in the second, we find them assigning as the reason for the same, that he was guilty of '*blasphemy*' ; for that 'being a man he *made himself God*,' namely, by calling God his Father. Well, have we now got a proof that the appellation of THE SON OF GOD has been applied to our Lord *on account of his Divine nature*, on account of *God being his PROPER FATHER?* (*ΠΑΤΕΡΑ ΙΔΙΟΝ*.) We have got more. We have got a proof, that our Lord himself lays down his life in *testimony of the truth of this application of the title*. By his acquiescence at his last moments in the sense which the Jews put upon those words, he proclaims his own divinity. .

"Having, therefore, thus claimed to himself a *divine* nature, he was also, for the unfolding the whole truth as to the nature which he possessed, led to affirm the *human*, which was united with the *divine* by his *Incarnation*. And as the one part had been expressed by the title SON OF GOD, so the other was naturally conveyed by the corresponding form of denomination, SON OF MAN.

"It is worth remarking that, of the two titles, *Son of God* and *Son of man*, applied to our Lord in the New Testament, each of them more than eighty times, the former is a title used familiarly of our Lord by all ; but the latter is a name applied only by himself, excepting in Acts vii. 56, where he is said to be seen by St. Stephen in the heavens after his ascension ; and in Hebrews ii. 6, and Rev. i. 13 and xiv. 14, the first of which is a

which result to us from this fact. Thus he tells us, in the second chapter and fourteenth verse, that, "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." And again, in the seventeenth verse: "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." And again in the fourth chapter and two last verses: "We have not," he says, "an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

quotation from the Psalms, and the other two refer, as the vision of St. Stephen did, to that exaltation in the heavens, which, with our Lord's dying words he declared, awaited the *Son of man*: so that, in truth, except when our Lord himself assumes it as an appellation, it is never used concerning him in the New Testament, save only to establish the fact of his having ascended into heaven, which no mortal eye could have been represented only in his bodily form; in that form, in reference to which he had designated himself as the *Son of man*.—*Magee*, vol. iii., p. 31, &c.

From these names, therefore, we may learn, as appears from these passages in Hebrews, first, the suitability of Christ to be our Saviour, or High Priest. As he is "the Son of God," we know his power; as he is "the Son of man," we learn his adaptation to the work of salvation. He, taking upon himself our nature, has become a qualified priest, and as man has worked and atoned for men. As by man came sin, so by man comes righteousness; as in the first Adam all have died, so by the second Adam, "the Lord from heaven," life is obtained for all.

But there is another truth connected with this title of "Son of man," and that is, that Christ, as such, is to judge mankind. This our Lord himself teaches us, saying, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son;" and adds that the Father hath given the Son "authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of man."* To the true penitent what truth so comfortable as this? On that thrice solemn day when all that are in their graves shall rise to appear at the dread tribunal of a holy God, to give an account, each for himself, what shall be our stay, what our support, whither shall we flee for refuge? Where but to the feet of our Judge, who, O glorious truth! is our brother, and has before shed his most precious

blood to blot out our transgressions? There alone is refuge for the guilty. But oh! if, then, that Judge is not our friend, if we have disobeyed and rejected him, what overwhelming ruin, what heart-crushing despair, what burning shame shall be our miserable portion for ever!

But as Christ is "the Son of man," we learn further the blessed fact of his sympathy with us: "He knoweth our frames, and remembreth that we are but dust," and that though the spirit may be willing, "the flesh is weak." Hence we may with comfort rest on him in time of trial, and the hour of weakness. Hence, also, we have a ground of filial confidence in prayer, remembering that we draw near through our brother, partaker of our flesh and blood, who himself prayed even to agony. He, "the Son of man," can feel for us men, and *we* can come boldly to him; while as "the Son of God" *he* can plead with God. God and man, he stands between God and men, our all-suitable and all-powerful mediator.

But we now proceed to observe the position of "the Son of man," as here seen by the apostle. He beheld the Son of man "in the midst of the seven candlesticks;" and when our blessed Saviour addresses the angel of the Ephesian church, as we read in the first verse of the second chapter, he describes himself as "walking in the midst of the

seven golden candlesticks." Let us recollect that these candlesticks represent Christ's church, and then it will be evident that his being, and walking in the midst of them, signifies his presence in, his care for, and government of his church as its Prophet, Priest and King.

In the fourth chapter of Numbers and the sixteenth verse, we read that, "to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest pertaineth *the oil for the light*, and the sweet incense, and the daily meat-offering, and the anointing oil, and *the oversight of all the tabernacle, and of all that therein is*, in the sanctuary, and in the vessels thereof." Here we have figuratively expressed the office of our High Priest in the midst of the candlesticks. It consists of "the oversight," the episcopacy or bishopric, of all the church, all that are in it, and all its vessels; even as is implied when St. Peter calls our Saviour "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls."* It signifies, moreover, that he is amidst his church to dispense the Holy Spirit continually, as well as to present and plead his one great sacrifice for sin, and to make his people's prayers acceptable through the incense of his merits.

Especially in reference to the passage we are considering, let us observe that it was the priest's duty to provide oil to sustain the lights in the candlestick. So Christ, our great High Priest, is amidst his

* 1 Pet. ii. 25..

church to provide the oil of the Spirit in order to preserve the light of truth in the church at large, as well as in each believer's soul. Without this the lamp will go out. Christ is then ever in his church, and extends to it his closest care. His eyes are upon, his presence in, and his providence over it. He orders all things here below in reference to, and for the good of his church. He "is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: he shall help her, and that right early."

Now all that is thus true of the church at large, is true also in relation to each believer in particular. Hence abundant streams of comfort flow, therefore, to the people of God.

Herefrom, in the first place, the penitent and trembling soul may draw peace. Jesus, the tender, the compassionate Saviour, is in the midst of his church. Though now exalted in glory, his character, as we have observed, is still the same as when he was conversant on earth among men. When he was bodily present, throughout the whole history of his sojourn, we can find no instance in which he rejected any, the humblest, the most unworthy; nay, his enemies made it a charge against him that he received sinners and ate with them. He is still the same—the sinners' friend, ready to be gracious to all who come to God through him. He is still by faith, as it were, within our reach; we may still

"touch the hem of his garment," for "he is not far from every one of us." He is amldst his church, and in his ordinances—and drawing near through them with faith, we shall find him, and find peace and pardon in him.

But not only are we to contemplate Jesus as in his church to save the penitent sinner that flees to him ; he is also present in the midst of us to give comfort to his people. He is "a very present help in trouble." A time must come to every one, when to all creature comforts we must say as Job did to his friends, "miserable comforters are ye all." But Jesus is "the friend formed for adversity." "When," says the Psalmist, "my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up." Are we visited with afflictions, do the stormes and billows of sorrow beat upon us, are friends and loved ones lost, or do they fail to comfort us ? Then Jesus is the "refuge from the storm," the faithful, unforsaking friend, who alone can speak peace to the soul, and, lo, "there is a great calm." In all such seasons happy for us if we seek him ; and he is present in his church, and to be found in his ordinances. Let us wait upon him, and he shall comfort our hearts.

Again : Jesus may be considered as thus present in the midst of his church, in order to give strength to the weak—to supply the oil whereby we may shine as lights in the world. Do we lament the weak-

ness of our faith? Let us fly to Jesus, praying with the apostles, "Increase our faith," and with the anxious parent, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" Do we fear the might of the devil, and the power of temptations? "The Lord is a stronghold in the day of trouble"—the righteous runneth into the "strong tower" of his name, and is safe. Depending on Him that hath loved us, we shall "come off more than conquerors." Without Christ all strength is weakness, in him our weakness is strength: "He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall: but they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength: they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."* Jesus, the strengthener of his people, is in the midst of his church, and to be found in his ordinances.

But further, viewing Jesus as "walking," that is, active, "in the midst" of his church, we are reminded of his particular providence over it. He is in it as the "Son over his own house;"† for of him "the whole family in heaven and earth," the church in glory and the church on earth, "is called:"—"He is the head of the body, the church." Now, as the head of the household cares and provides for the

* Isa. xl. 29—31.

† Heb. iii. 6.

family, so, but more perfectly, Jesus Christ orders the affairs of his household, the church. All things are arranged for her benefit according to the appointment of Him who ordereth all things after his own sovereign and most wise will, and who maketh the ultimate result of every dispensation to be good for his people “All things work together for good to them that love God, the called according to his purpose.” Let us, then, trust where we do not see ; being persuaded of the infinite wisdom and goodness of him who, in the church, “holds the helm and guides the ship.” Let us thus consider Jesus in his church, and we shall be delivered from that too great anxiety of mind about worldly things which our Lord so much condemns.

The presence of Jesus in his church teaches us, also, her security. Thus our blessed Lord, after his resurrection, assured the disciples of the permanency of his church, saying, “Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world.” Because of his presence, she stands secure, and shall so stand to the end : “God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved.” “Her foundations are upon the holy hill.” Enemies may attack her, and cry, Down with her ! but they only attack him whose she is, and who dwells in the midst of her. We admire the courage of one of old, who, when the seamen feared the storm, encouraged them to launch into the deep because they conveyed him and his fortunes. This, however, was but rash daring.

Much more wisely brave may he be who is embarked in the church of Christ. In his voyage, storms, indeed, and a rough sea he shall meet; and oftentimes darkness may seem to overwhelm him; and Jesus, even, may sometimes appear to sleep, until, not seldom, our unbelieving hearts are ready to exclaim, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" But still we are safe, for Jesus is with us, and our cause is his cause. Therefore, though believers and the whole church have to navigate a tempestuous sea, and encounter heavy storms, they triumphantly shall ride the waves until they anchor safe in the haven of eternal rest, "whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus."*

While we reflect upon Christ Jesus as thus ever in the midst of his church, we ought more especially to remember that his presence is more peculiarly vouchsafed, and that he is most usually found and communicated with in the assembly of his people. His own promise gives us the assurance of this, when he said to his disciples, "where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."† Wherever his name is recorded he is especially present to bless: "The Lord loveth the gates of Sion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Coming, therefore, to the house of public prayer, we should be filled with peculiar joy and solemnity, for it is "the house of God and the gate of heaven."‡ God is, indeed, everywhere pre-

* Heb. vi. 19, 20. † Matt. xviii. 20. ‡ Gen. xxviii. 17.

sent; but in the assembly of his church we come, as it were, into his presence-chamber, where he has promised especially to meet us. With how great reverence, then, should we tread his courts! "Holy and reverend is his name," and "holiness becometh his house for ever." Solemn and heavenly thoughts should, therefore, be our companions to God's house; and with these, and to assist these, there should be in that house a becoming reverence of manner. Remembering the glorious presence there vouchsafed, our behaviour should be suitable to such a presence. He who enters the court and presence of an earthly potentate, learns and observes the rules of propriety laid down; and so, but much more, when we enter the courts of God's house should we carefully conform to the outward forms and orders directed as becoming and assisting to devotion. For example: kneeling is the posture which Scripture teaches as suitable to prayer, and the church likewise enjoins it, as much assisting devotion; yet very many in every congregation neglect it, either sitting or standing during prayer. But if we duly feel and reflect upon the presence in which we are and the duty in which we are engaged, we would more carefully conform to this and every other propriety of outward, because assisting so much to inward devotion. There may, indeed, be outward devotion without inward, and, when such is the case, it is in vain; but the latter

can rarely, if ever, be where the former is neglected. The holy presence of Jesus, if duly felt and remembered, will produce both.

We have thus seen how blessed a thing it is that Christ is in the midst of his church; but let us observe, that we can only meet and enjoy him, and receive the blessings he is present to bestow, by using the ordinances which he has appointed as the means of grace. He is to be found by the word, in the reading and the hearing of it. He is to be found in prayer, both in private, and, more especially, in public. He is to be found in his sacraments, "the pledges of his love," given "for our great and endless comfort." In his word he speaks to us, in prayer we speak to him; in the sacraments we, as it were, see him and sit down with him. In the Supper of the Lord, when faithfully partaken, who has not realized the presence of Jesus, and seen him set forth before our eyes as crucified among us? Herein, the Saviour's love is most strikingly displayed, and we feel that he is with us of a truth, dispensing to our souls all the various graces they require, and "the innumerable benefits which, by his precious blood-shedding, he hath obtained to us." Herein, not only are we assured of Christ's presence with his church at large, but, O blessed and wonderful truth! that he takes up his abode in *each* faithful heart; "he dwells in us, and we in him: we are one with Christ, and Christ with us,"

and we are assured "hereby, that we are very members incorporate in his mystical body."

But if it is to the sincere believer a most precious truth that Jesus is thus amidst his church, and to be found in the use of the means of grace, on the other hand it is a truth that ought to alarm the ungodly and the hypocrite. It is impossible for such to deceive Christ, to shun his notice, to avoid his presence, or to escape out of his hand. Over his church he exercises his especial rule as on it he bestows his peculiar blessings; and, therefore, sinners in it cannot be in the position of the heathen, who have never enjoyed the advantages of the church. These may, perhaps, perish in their ignorance, but certainly their condition in futurity cannot but be happy as compared with that of mere nominal Christians. He who knows his Master's will and yet disobeys it, shall most justly meet with heavier punishment than he who disobeys in not wilful ignorance. May none of us be of this number, but, guided by the Holy Spirit, may all who read these pages be faithful believers upon Jesus Christ and him crucified, and in spirit as well as in name, be members of that church amidst which he walks ! So shall we hereafter, live and reign with him in eternal glory !

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR HIGH PRIEST.

THE ROBE.

"Clothed with a garment down to the foot."—Verse 13.

WHAT we have hitherto considered may be called the grand outline of the vision beheld by St. John ; we are now to direct our attention to the filling-up of the picture. Turning to see who it was that addressed him, John beheld "seven golden candlesticks," and in the midst of them, "one like unto the Son of man;" this is the outline : but now he goes onward to relate minute particulars relative to the appearance, dress, voice, deeds, and words, of the Son of man : this is the filling-up of the picture. We have considered what we may learn from the figure whereby the church is here emblemed, and we have found that the Being seen amidst the candlesticks was the great Head of the church, even Jesus Christ our Saviour, and what we may learn from the position he is represented as occupying. We now come to those

particulars relative to our Saviour's appearance which the apostle has recorded.

It cannot be supposed that any of these particulars are unimportant or without instruction for us. Whatsoever is written, is written for our learning ; and Jesus has directed,* as we have seen, that St. John should commit to writing all that he beheld, and these things, therefore, he has here recorded. Had not these things been written we should have been kept ignorant of the truths they teach us, or, at least, less informed concerning them than we need now to be ; consequently, it is our duty to study them, and not to be satisfied until we derive some instruction from them : for surely instruction is in them, if only we can draw it forth. That we may profit by them, let us pray that the Holy Spirit may enlighten our minds, and show to us "the great and wondrous things" of God's word.

The apostle mentions, first, the robe in which Jesus Christ appeared to him : he was "clothed with a garment down to the foot." He is here dressed as a man. This may serve, therefore, to impress upon us once more the great and glorious facts, that, Jesus Christ has carried with him into the glory of his Father his human nature, and that, in that nature he shall ever live and reign. When we think of heaven and our entrance into the Divine presence, let it be our comfort to know, that the same Jesus who was here

with us, will be there to meet us, still our brother, and evidently appearing as such, the "Son of man," and robed as a man. When the heart almost sinks beneath the sense of the divine splendour, majesty, and holiness, let this unspeakably blessed truth be our stay. Hence also let us learn the dignity of human nature. That which the Son of God has so highly exalted must be called to, and worthy of dignity. Let us endeavour, therefore, to "walk worthy of our vocation," and in our conduct towards our fellow-men show that we have reverence for our common nature.

But not only does this particular indicate him to be still "*the man*," it also most strikingly marks him to be now in glory, as from the beginning, the great office-bearer of his church. We have seen that the figure which is here used to represent the church of Christ is taken from the institutions of religion among the Israelites, while, also, Christ is represented here as fulfilling spiritually those offices relative to the church, which the priest of old literally performed, relative to the typical candlestick. In other words, Christ when he is here represented as in the midst of the candlesticks, is in fact shown to be the High Priest of his church.

The Israelitish priests were in all respects—in person, in office, and in dress—figurative persons, types of the great and true High Priest, now entered into heaven for us, even Jesus Christ. That this priesthood was thus typical we are distinctly taught

by St. Paul in his epistle to the Hebrews, for indeed the grand object of that epistle is to give us instruction on this point. In it the apostle teaches us that, amongst other things, according to the type of the Levitical priesthood, the true high priest must in person be a man. In this respect we have seen that Christ fulfils the type, being a partaker of our nature, "the Son of man." In office, also, we have seen him fulfilling the type, when he is represented as walking in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks ; that is, governing, providing, and caring for the church. We are now to view him as here set before us in the robes of priesthood, and to consider what instruction we may gather from thence.

He was "clothed with a garment down to the foot." We have already referred to the tenth chapter of Daniel's prophecy as being very parallel to the opening of the Revelation. There we read, in the fifth verse, that he who in the "similitude of the sons of men," gave the vision to that prophet, was similarly arrayed : "Then," says Daniel, "I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen." Observe also, as we shall have again to notice that in what is further recorded in this and the following verses, this "*certain man*" is described with particulars remarkably agreeing with that description which St. John here gives us of the appearance of our Saviour ; and that his action and words are also

similar, and the effects of his presence the same. Our attention is to be limited for the present, however, to part of this fifth verse, and its remarkable agreement with the description of Christ's robes in the words under consideration. Here is "a certain man," evidently he who is elsewhere called by Daniel "the Son of man," "clothed in linen," and in other particulars corresponding with Christ's appearance to St. John. This agreement identifies him who appeared to Daniel as the same with him who appeared to John; and serves to prove, if nothing else did, that some important truths must be taught us by these particulars, or otherwise the Spirit would not have caused his servants so carefully to note and record them.

The truths we may learn hence are, the priesthood of Christ, and the blessings we have thereby, as figured by the robes of the Levitical priesthood.

There are in Scripture many passages which relate to these Levitical robes. We refer first, and chiefly, to the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus, where the directions as to their formation are given. In the second verse of that chapter we are told that, God commanded Moses to "make holy garments for glory and for beauty" for the high priest, Aaron his brother. The Lord then proceeds to give particular directions as to the material, colour, and formation of these garments. The part of these particulars to which we especially refer at present, is contained in the

thirty-first and four following verses, where we read,
“Thou shalt make^o the robe of the ephod all of blue.
And there shall be an hole in the top of it, in the
midst thercof : it shall have a binding of woven work
round about the hole of it, as it were the hole of an
habergeon, that it be not rent. And beneath upon
the hem of it thou shalt make pomegranates of blue,
and of purple, and of scarlet, round about the hem
thereof ; and bells of gold between them round about :
a golden bell and a pomegranate, a golden bell and a
pomegranate, upon the hem of the robe round about.
And it shall be upon Aaron to minister : and his
sound shall be heard when he goeth in unto the holy
place before the LOR^D, and when he cometh out,
that he die not.”

Here we find directions as to the formation of that robe which is called “the robe of the ephod,” because the ephod was put on it, containing in it the memorial stones * and the breast-plate of judgment,† which also held the Urim and Thummim,‡ the whole being girded together by “the curious girdle of the ephod.”§ It is in this “robe of the ephod” that Jesus Christ here appears to St. John, and therefore with all that belonged to this robe, as well as the girdle that girded it. In other words, Christ is here by his robes pointed out to be our great High Priest, and from him, as such, we learn the significance of all

* Verse 12. † Verses 28, 29. ‡ Verse 30. § Verses 8, 28.

that pertained to the robes of the Levitical priesthood; while from that priesthood we may learn, also, the peculiar works of Christ as our High Priest. The type foreshadows the reality, while the reality explains the type; and both prove the beautiful harmony and oneness of Scripture. Christ Jesus is the light-centre of Scripture. In the Old Testament various rays of his glory are dispersed, each bright and beautiful; but they all meet in him, and in united brightness shine in the New Testament. The light of heaven in which we live and move, and from which we have so many blessings, is made up of various coloured rays, which, blended in one, form the light of day. As these various rays are the types of the Old Testament, their central union-point, resulting in heavenly light, is Jesus! As the philosopher can divide the light into its component parts, and examine each "distinct particular" ray by itself with instruction and pleasure, so the disciple of Christ ought, from the full and perfect light which is in Jesus, to trace back those rays of brightness which of old pointed to him; and in doing so he cannot fail to gain instruction and pleasure. Not the least interesting and bright of these beams shine to us from the Levitical priesthood.

That the robe "down to his foot," in which our blessed Saviour here appeared, corresponds with "the robe of the ephod," we may gather, in the first place,

from the agreement which in general we shall see between his appearance here and the priestly clothing. More especially we may learn this from the word rendered in our translation, "a garment down to the foot," (*Ποδήρη,*) for this is the very word used by the Septuagint in the thirty-first verse of the twenty-eighth of Exodus, to express "the robe of the ephod." Hence we may read that verse, according to the Septuagint, "the garment down to the foot," thus expressing more clearly the parallel between the garment of Christ and that of the Jewish high priests. We must also bear in mind that the Septuagint is no mean authority, inasmuch as our Lord and the apostles rarely quote from the Old Testament except in the words or sense of this Greek translation ; and this being the case, we may conclude that, in using this word here, St. John had special reference to the robe distinguished by the same name in that translation.

Taking it, then, as evident that these robes are one, let us notice the particulars in reference to it mentioned in Exodus. From its very name it is evident that it covered the whole person of the priest, except the head. We learn, also, that a hole, carefully bound "in order that it should not be rent," was left in it, through which the head was passed, while the robe, both before and behind, went down to the foot.

Now let us here pause, and refer to other passages

of Scripture which appear to relate to this garment. Turning, then, to the twenty-second Psalm, our blessed Saviour speaking therein of his sufferings and death, says, in the eighteenth verse, "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture." The fulfilment of this prophecy is briefly alluded to by St. Mark,* and St. Luke,† and somewhat more fully by St. Matthew,‡ but St. John more largely than the other three relates the matter. In the nineteenth chapter of his Gospel and the twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses, we are told that the soldiers, after "they had crucified Jesus, took his garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part, and also his coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the Scripture might be fulfilled which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did." It is said in our translation that "his coat" was the garment which, being woven throughout, they would not rend; but we must remember that we are not to understand hereby such a garment as we now call by that name, for such a garment was not then, neither, indeed, is at present, used in the East. It signifies a tunic or robe. It was, then, in a woven, seamless robe Jesus was clad when crucified;

* Mark xv. 24.

+ Luke xxiii. 33.

‡ Matt. xxvii. 35.

and therefore one which was evidently so made as not to be easily rent. In this it was similar to the robe of Aaron, for we read that this "robe of the ephod" was of "woven work," with "a band around the hole, that it should not rend."* We do not say this was the actual priestly robe, but it was a mystical and typical robe, as all agree. It must have had some deep meaning, or surely Christ had not, through David, foretold that it should not be rent, neither would it have been so minutely recorded by the evangelists that this prediction was fulfilled. Here is, then, a remarkable link running through the Scripture. Here is a type, a prophecy, a fact, all illustrating Christ's appearance in glory, clothed with "the garment down to the foot," and pointing him out to be the true and great High Priest of his Church.

But there is another remarkable command and circumstance recorded in Scripture relative to this priestly robe, which serve to show the passing away of the typical priesthood, when Christ was about to "enter into the holiest, to appear in the presence of God for us" as the eternal and true High Priest. The command referred to is contained in the twenty-first chapter of Leviticus and the tenth verse. It is there written, "He that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose

* Exod. xxxix. 22, 23.

head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, *nor rend his clothes.*" Here the high priest is expressly forbidden to rend his garments, (one of which was, as we have seen, so formed as to prevent its being rent,) which was a common sign among the Jews of grief, anger, or astonishment. Now, if we refer to the twenty-sixth chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel, we read, in the sixty-fifth verse, of the high priest violating this precept. In reply to the solemn adjuration of the high priest, Jesus had declared himself to be both the Son of God and the Son of man, and that he should yet sit on the right hand of God, and come again to earth in majesty, (verses 63, 64;) and when the high priest heard this, he "*rent his clothes*, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy." By this act he, as it were, degraded himself from the priesthood, unconsciously yielding it up to him whom he charged with blasphemy, and who was now immediately about to offer up, as the true High Priest, the great, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice once offered. Evidently this violation of the law was a prophetical, or typical action, performed, indeed, without knowledge by him who did it, figuring the abolishing of the ritual priesthood, Christ now commencing to be the High Priest over the house of God.

We shall the more readily consider this rending of

his robe as a prophetical action signifying these things, when we recollect the prophetical words of this same high priest. This same Caiaphas was employed by God to deliver, though himself ignorant of the fact, a most remarkable prophecy of the sacrifice of Christ for us. This verbal prophecy will be found in the eleventh chapter of St. John's Gospel, where we are told that, after the raising of Lazarus, a council was held relative to Jesus, and that in it Caiaphas, "being high priest that same year," gave them this advice ; "it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." (verse 50.) Upon these words the evangelist gives us the following important commentary : "This spake he not of himself : but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation ; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." (verses 51, 52.) Here we learn that, on account of his official character, he was employed by God to deliver an oracle, which at least as clearly as any other part of Scripture declares to us the vicarious sufferings of Christ, that he suffered in the stead of men. For evidently this is the force of his argument : "Either we must perish, or Jesus of Nazareth must die ; let him die in place of us." This was his policy ; but the Spirit teaches us hereby that Jesus hath died

for, 'that is, in the stead of sinners,* who but for his death must have perished. As, then, being an official person, he was unconsciously employed to prophesy in words so distinctly of Christ's sacrifice ; so in the same character, in rending his robe, he was employed, to prophesy in act of the passing away of the Aaronical priesthood, and the establishment of the more excellent and eternal priesthood of Christ. When our Redeemer died, the veil of the temple was rent ; the Holy Ghost signifying thereby, that the " new and living way" into the presence of God, " by the blood of Christ," was now opened, and " consecrated for us through the veil—that is to say, his flesh;" and when the Jewish priesthood was to cease, " for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof," the mystical robe was violently and unlawfully rent by the high-priest himself. All the typical sacrifices were now to be abolished, Christ being about by a " greater and more perfect" sacrifice, even the sacrifice of himself, to perfect " for ever them that are sanctified ;" therefore, also, the priesthood ordained to offer these

* This important doctrine is very clearly typified in the sacrifice of the ram which Abraham offered up in place of his son Isaac. Isaac, in this part of the interesting events recorded in the twenty-second of Genesis, stands for the church, sentenced to death, but God provided " himself a lamb for a burnt-offering ;" and " Abraham took the ram, and offered him up a burnt-offering in *the stead of his son.*" (verse 13.)

sacrifices "year by year continually" ceased; another high priest, oath-made, "consecrated for evermore," and "after the order of Melchisedec," being ordained to offer up this sacrifice, and for ever to "appear in the presence of God for us." All this is implied when Caiaphas abrogated his office, in violation of the law rending his robe, which robe, in its spiritual import, figured Jesus Christ, and was fulfilled in, and now belonged to him.

Christ being then represented as our great High Priest when we are told that he was "clothed with a garment down to the foot," let us now observe some useful truths we may learn from this fact, as well as from the robe itself, by which he is here indicated to be our high priest.

1. When we know Jesus to be our priest, we learn that he must have made atonement by sacrifice for our sins. The very object of the divinely-appointed Levitical priesthood was to offer such sacrifices, and the very name involves the idea of sacrifice in it. St. Paul teaches this when he says,* "every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin." And again, he tells us in the eighth chapter of Hebrews and the third verse, that "every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices;" and hence he argues that Christ, as our high priest, must

* Heb. v. i.

“of necessity have somewhat to offer.” And what he had to offer, and how efficacious it was to atone for sin, we are taught very distinctly by the apostle in various parts of the same epistle. The sacrifice was himself; and the satisfaction thereby made is perfect. Thus we learn in the ninth chapter, that Christ, not “by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us;” (verse 12;), so also in the last verse of that chapter we read,— “Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many.” And further, in the tenth chapter we read, “we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (verses 10—14.) To this also agree the words of Jesus when he says that the Son of man came “to give his life a ransom for many;”* and also his name of “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world;”† under which figure of a sacrificial lamb, Isaiah also had foretold his atonement in the fifty-third chapter of his prophecy, and to which

* Matt. xx. 28.

† John i. 29.

prediction St. Peter alludes when he says,* that we are redeemed "with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;" who "suffered for us," "his own self bearing our sins in his own body on the tree;" "for Christ hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."† The sacrifice which Christ as our priest, offers up, is also taught when in this book of the Revelation, he is compared to "a lamb as it had been slain," and when he is praised for that he was slain and has redeemed his people to God by his blood.‡ Hence the sacrifice for sins which Christ offers as our high priest is, the sacrifice of himself. He is both victim and priest; and as the latter he ever liveth to plead his work as the former, "for all that come unto God through him."

2. But to be qualified for the office of priest not only must he have a sacrifice to offer, there must be also sympathy between the priest and those for whom he ministered. In the fifth chapter of the Hebrews the apostle states this to be requisite; and also shows that Jesus Christ, here indicated as our high priest, is possessed of this qualification. That this is required in the priest he declares in the second verse, saying, that he must be one who "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that

* 1 Pet. i. 19. † Ib. ii. 21, 24, and iii. 18.

‡ Rev. v. 6, 9, 12, and xiii. 8.

are out of the way ; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." And then he teaches us that Christ Jesus is in this respect adapted to his office, saying, he "in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared ; though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered," and thus he was made perfect. (verses 7, 8, 9.) This same requisite to a perfect priest the apostle again states to be possessed by Jesus, in the two last verses of the second chapter of the same epistle, when he observes, "in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people ; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted ;" and from the fact that our high priest is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "in all points tempted like as we are," the apostle, in the last verses of the fourth chapter, encourages us to boldness in prayer.

This truth, involved in the fact of Christ being our high priest, is one of the most blessed in all revelation. He can feel for all the circumstances of those for whom he ministers. There is no distress, sorrow or temptation which his people can meet, into which he cannot

and does not enter. In trouble it is not to those whose course has been all prosperous we flee for consolation : no, we fly to those rather who themselves have endured calamity. And Jesus is such a friend, formed by adversity for adversity. " He knoweth (for he hath taken it upon himself) our frame, he rememberth that we are but dust." Boldly, then, through him may we draw near to the " throne of grace to obtain mercy, and find grace to help us in the time of need." Jesus,

" —— who did bear,
Too much of human woe to turn from human prayer,"

ever liveth on high as our sympathizing high priest, to make intercession for us.

3. Another requisite to entering on the priestly office is specified by the apostle in the fifth of Hebrews, namely, that it must not be undertaken without a call and appointment from God. " No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron." (verse 4.) Even so Christ, our high priest, did not take this office on himself, but was called of God to it. (verse 5.) The call was, the apostle teaches us in the fifth verse, addressed to our Saviour when God said to him, " Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee." Now, as this is the call of our Saviour to the priesthood, it also shows the exact time when he entered especially upon this office ; for these words are spoken

to our Saviour at his resurrection, and therefore it was then Christ especially commeſſed his priesthood. That these words refer to Christ's resurrection is evident from the manner in which St. Paul uses them in his sermon recorded in the thirteenth of the Acts, where, in the thirty-third vſe, he quotes them as predicting that event. And again, the same apostle, in the fourth verse of the first chapter of his epistle to the Romans, observes, that Jesus was "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The moment of his resurrection was the commencement, therefore, in an especial manner, of his priesthood. Indeed, in a certain and most important sense, he was always the high priest of his people, even as he was always the sacrifice, "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world;" but even as at a particular time, the time of his death, he was actually sacrificed, so at a particular time, the time of his resurrection, he was "called of God an high priest."

But in the same chapter of the Hebrews, and in the sixth verse, the apostle gives us another passage from one of the Psalms in which Jesus is appointed high priest by the call of God, who said to him, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec;" or, as it is in the psalm itself, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest

for ever after the order of Melchisedec."* There are several remarkable things in this call. First, we notice that it is with an oath : "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent." The apostle, in the seventh of Hebrews, draws our attention to this as a proof of the superiority of Christ's priesthood to all others. Others, he observes, were made without an oath, but Jesus with an oath ; and therefore, he argues the superiority of his priesthood, and that he is "the surety of a better testament :" (verses 20—22.) Again : observe that he is declared to be "a priest for ever ;" and because he "continueth for ever, he hath an unchangeable priesthood, and is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."† This enduring character of his priesthood and its general superiority to the Levitical, is also implied in the fact that it is "after the order of Melchisedec." This Melchisedec order, moreover, unites royalty with the priesthood ; and hence Christ, by his call to this order, is indicated to be king as well as priest. Accordingly, we find our Saviour's glory thus foretold : "He shall sit and rule upon his throne ; and he shall be a priest upon his throne ;"‡ and at the consummation of all things, when he comes forth to vindicate to himself his high prerogatives, he is represented as priest and king, as

* Psa. cx. 4. † Heb. vii. 24, 25. ‡ Zech. vi. 13.

well as prophet of his church. This we find in the nineteenth chapter of this Revelation, where in the thirteenth verse, we read that, Jesus "was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood," which marks his priesthood; and that "his name is called the Word of God," which is his name as prophet; while his kinghood is distinctly implied in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, and in the sixteenth verse expressed in words as being marked upon his priestly vest, where we read, "he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of kings, and Lord of lords." To this union of offices involved in the order of priesthood to which Christ is called, we shall have occasion again to refer.

But further: Christ being as our high priest called of God, and called to this particular order, we learn hereby to consider him as "Jehovah our righteousness," (Jer. xxiii. 6;) and as "Jehovah our peace," (Judges vi. 24;) even as Melchisedec was "king of righteousness," and "king of peace." * Hence this; the peculiar order to which Jesus is called as priest, includes his work and its result to us. He, as our Melchisedec, leads us to his Salem, and his righteousness becomes our peace. And to this righteousness of Christ's producing our peace, let us now turn our attention.

* Heb. vii. 2.

So far we have observed what we may in general learn as to Christ,• inasmuch as by this robe he is shown to be our high priest; let us now go on to consider what we may particularly learn of him in this office from this robe; in other words, the peculiar meaning of this mystical garment. That this robe had a spiritual meaning appears evident for the especial attention which we have seen bestowed upon it in so many parts of Scripture. We are now to consider what this meaning may be.

(1.) In the first place, this robe is emblematical of Christ's righteousness, which he has wrought out for us, thereby becoming "the Lord our righteousness," or our Melchisedec. To have guilt pardoned, and to be accepted as righteous, are very distinct and different things, though united in the salvation which is in Christ. Pardon may be, and actually is not unfrequently, granted by earthly rulers to their fellow-men; but this by no means constitutes the pardoned persons innocent of the guilt of their misdoings. But the justified sinner is both pardoned his transgressions, and accepted as righteous in God's sight. His pardon is on account of Christ's atoning sacrifice, and he is accounted as righteous by the imputation of Christ's righteousness. Now, this seamless, body-covering robe, we take as representing this righteousness. We find that such a figure is used elsewhere in Scripture to represent the putting

on of righteousness. Thus David prays, "Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness;*" and thus Isaiah represents the happiness of God's people: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."[†]

But there is a striking figure and parabolic action recorded by the prophet Zechariah, illustrative of the remission of our sins and our acceptance in the robe of our High Priest. In the third chapter of the book of that prophet and in the third verse, we read that Joshua the high priest "was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel." We are next informed that the Lord said, "Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto Joshua he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with a change of raiment." And here let us observe, that the Septuagint uses the same word for this raiment as we have noted to be used in the twenty-ninth of Exodus and by the evangelist in the passage under consideration -- a word signifying "a garment down to the foot," (*ποδήρη.*) Now, the prophet goes on to tell us, in the eighth verse, that

Joshua and his fellows were men who were for a “sign” (*marginal reading*), that is, typical men. And that they were types of “the man whose name is the Branch,” we learn both in that verse and in the passage contained from the tenth to the thirteenth verses, inclusive, of the sixth chapter. As in his name, Joshua, and in his office of high priest, this man was typical of Christ, so also in other circumstances, and amongst them those related in the third and fourth verses of the third chapter. The filthy garments in which he stood at first, represent Jesus counted as a sinner in God’s sight, because “the Lord hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all;” the clean garment (the *ποδιρη*) “down to his foot,” in which Joshua was subsequently clothed, represents this “garment down to his foot,” in which Jesus appeared to St. John,—his holy, mystical garment of perfect righteousness.

This passage of Zechariah may also be applied to us as we are in Christ. We stand before God by ourselves, clothed, as it were, in filthy garments, for “we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;”* but when, by faith, we are found in Jesus, then our defiled garments are taken off, our iniquities are removed,† and we are clothed with a change of raiment, even with “white robes,” the “given” righteousness of the saints.‡ In our Lord’s parable of the wedding-feast, “the wedding-gar-

* Isa. lxiv. 6. † Zech. iii. 9. ‡ Rev. vi. 11.

ment”* without which no person was permitted to be a guest, evidently also represents the righteousness of Christ, which is our right to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. To this figure agrees also the exhortation of the apostle: “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ;” for it is in the Lord alone that we have righteousness.†

Viewing, then, this robe as the emblem of that righteousness which, as our high priest, Jesus has wrought out for us, let us observe its completeness and sufficiency. This robe went down to our Saviour’s feet, covering his whole body, so that his head alone appeared. Even so his righteousness covers all the members of his mystical body, being “unto all, and upon all them that believe,” he, the head, alone appearing for them. That believers are his body is evident, for the apostle St. Paul writing to the Christians at Ephesus, tells them, in his fifth chapter and thirtieth verse, “We are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.” It was with reference to this mystical body, “the blessed company of all faithful people,”‡ that the direction that not a bone of the paschal lamb should be broken was given; (Ex. xii. 46;) that David foretold of “the Lamb of God” that not one of his bones should be broken, (Ps. xxxiv. 20;) and that we are told, in accordance with this type and prophecy, not a bone was broken

* Matt. xxii. 11—13. † Isa. xlvi. 24, 25, and liv. 17.

‡ Prayer after Communion.

in Christ's literal body, (John xix. 33—36.) All these figured the blessed care of Jesus for his people made members of his body, one with him and he with them. Now, when by faith we are thus one with Jesus, being made members of his mystical body, we are consequently covered with this mystical robe, and are "accepted in the beloved."* By virtue of this our union with Christ, all that is ours becomes his; and all that is his is counted as ours. Our sins have by imputation become his; and in the Psalms, which contain the private meditations and prayers of our Saviour, he frequently speaks of them as absolutely his: thus, for example, in the twelfth verse of the fortieth Psalm, he says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head, therefore my heart faileth me." On the other hand, his righteousness by imputation becomes ours, and we are accounted as righteous through his righteousness. In this spotless and seamless robe of Christ's, all who believe are justified and counted righteous before God. To this agrees the language of St. Paul, when he says, God hath made Christ "to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:"† and again, when he says that Jesus is "made unto us of God righteousness;"‡ and therefore, also, he expresses his desire

* Eph. i. 6. † 2 Cor. v. 21. ‡ 1 Cor. i. 30.

"to be found in him, not having his own righteousness, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith."*

That the righteousness of Christ is the robe in which we are accepted, and clad in which we shall be permitted, unworthy as we are, to sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb, is a truth very full of comfort. No righteousness which is not absolutely perfect can be accepted with God; but our best obedience is fearfully imperfect; and therefore, for a righteousness on which we may rest with peace, we must look out of ourselves. Where shall we look but to our surety and great High Priest, "Jesus Christ the righteous?" He, for us, has magnified "the law, and made it honourable, and the Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake."† This can be our only ground of substantial peace in approaching to God, that our sins were laid on Jesus, and that his perfect and glorious righteousness is counted to us.

Beautiful is the language of the great Hooker on this doctrine. Noticing the expression in the thirtieth verse of the first chapter of St. Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians, that Jesus is made unto us of God righteousness, he observes that, the righteousness "whereby we are justified is perfect, but not inherent; that whereby we are sanctified is inherent, but not perfect. The righteousness wherein we must be found,

* Phil. iii. 9.

† Isa. xlvi. 21.

if we will be justified, is not our own : Christ hath merited righteousness, for as many as are found in him. In him God findeth us, if we be faithful, for by faith we are incorporated into Christ. Then, although in ourselves we be altogether sinful and unrighteous, yet even the man which is impious in himself, full of iniquity, full of sin ; him being found in Christ by faith, and having his sins remitted through repentance ; him God beholdeth with a gracious eye, putteth away his sin by not imputing it, taketh away the punishment due thereunto by pardoning it, and accepteth him in Jesus Christ, as perfectly righteous as if he had fulfilled all that was commanded him in the law. Shall I say, more perfectly righteous than if he himself had fulfilled the whole law ? I must take heed what I say ; but the apostle saith, God made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin ; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' Such are we, then, in the sight of God the Father, as is the very Son of God himself. This is our comfort and our wisdom ; we care for no knowledge in the world but this, that man hath sinned, and God hath suffered; that God hath made himself the Son of man, and that men are made the righteousness of God.* And again, in another place, he observes : " By imputation of righteousness, he hath covered the sins of every soul that believeth; by pardoning our sin, he hath taken it away;

* Sermon on Justification.*

so that now, although our transgressions be multiplied above the hairs of our head, yet being justified, we are as free and as clear as if there were no spot or stain or any uncleanness in us, for it is God that justifieth; and who shall lay anything to the charge of God's chosen?"*

But there is still a "strong consolation" to be derived from the instruction taught us by this robe. Not only is it seamless and perfect, but it goes down to the feet of Christ—to the lowest member of his body. From this we learn that Christ's righteousness, in all its glorious perfectness, reaches to the humblest and weakest believer in him, and makes even such accepted and safe in his merits. He stands for all his people, and all are righteous in him. Here is comfort for those oppressed with the weight of sin and deep sense of unworthiness; here is consolation for even the weak in faith. If, like the woman in the Gospel, we may but touch the hem of his garment, we shall be saved. As Jacob acknowledged Joseph's robe when presented to him by his other sons,† so, though we have been "verily guilty of our brother's blood," yet if we bring this robe of his to God, he will acknowledge it, and receive us in it. However vile, however wretched in ourselves, yet his righteousness extends to the lowliest and most

* Second Sermon on part of St. Jude's Epistle.

† Gen. xxxvii. 32, 33.

unworthy who believe on him, and in it they are perfectly righteous. Let us be clothed with, and rejoice in this glorious robe. May our experience and language be—

“ Jesus ! thy blood and righteousness
 My beauty are, my glorious dress ;
 'Midst flaming worlds, in these array'd,
 With joy shall I lift up my head.

“ This spotless robe the same appears
 When ruin'd Nature sinks in years ;
 No age can change its glorious hue,
 The robe of Christ is ever new.

“ And when the dead shall hear thy voice,
 Thy banish'd children shall rejoice ;
 Their beauty this, their glorious dress,
 JESUS, ‘ THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ ”

(2.) But Jesus is not only our high priest in whom the Lord is well-pleased, he is also our “ sanctification ;” and this, too, is indicated by this robe. We have seen, in the passage we have referred to in the twenty-eighth of Exodus, that “ upon the hem of the robe round about ” there were to be bells and pomegranates ; a golden bell and a pomegranate alternately. (verses 33, 34.) These we take to represent the fruits of the Spirit, and the manifestation of them ; the pomegranates representing the fruits, and the golden bells their manifestation. Our blessed Lord,

in the fifteenth chapter of St. John's Gospel, in conformity with this figure compares himself to a vine and his disciples to branches in him, and exhorts them to bring forth much fruit, and to let that fruit be manifest that the Father may be glorified. (verses 5 and 8.) Using a similar figure, St. Paul points out the beneficial effects of chastisements, saying that, they yield "the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby."* So, also, in another place, he calls the graces of the Spirit "the fruit of the Spirit."† Thus, holiness is represented frequently by the emblem of fruit, as, indeed, might be shown from many other passages. The golden bells alternating, represent the great duty of so living as that all men may "take knowledge of us that we have been with Jesus." They imply the injunction given us by our Lord, saying, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

Both of these things here figured were perfect in Christ; the fulness of the Spirit's graces was in his soul; and he "went about doing good," so that all bare him witness, and his enemies could bring no true charge against him. "He has left us an example to follow his steps." All who are justified in his righteousness are also sanctified, and endeavour to "walk in newness of life." His righteousness is our only

* Heb. xii. 11.

† Gal. v. 22, 23.

title to glory hereafter, our sanctification our meetness for, and our good works the road to it.

Hence, therefore, this bringing forth of the evident fruit of good living will be the mark of our having an interest in Christ's righteousness. If we are covered with the robe of his righteousness, we must have the marks of that robe—sanctification of the heart, manifested in obedience of the life. It is not possible that we should have a saving interest in Christ's righteousness without, in some measure, producing these results. We have noticed that, from the fact of Christ's mystical robe extending down to his foot, the humble and trembling may learn encouragement; let us now observe that these pomegranates and bells being at the hem of his robe, teach us that all who are in Christ must be conformed to his character, and, in measure, bring forth the fruits which abounded in his holy life. In one of the Psalms we read the grace of brotherly love compared to "the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments."* Even so the anointing of the Spirit poured upon our head, Jesus Christ, goes down to the "skirts of his garments," to his humblest follower. God has indeed given the Spirit unto him without measure, for "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell;" nevertheless, "out of

* Psa. cxxxiii. 2.

his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace:"* in other words, graces corresponding to the graces of Christ are, by the Spirit, produced in measure in all the disciples of Jesus. Hence St. John says, "we have an unction from the Holy One;"† and hence the name of Christ is compared to "ointment poured forth,"‡ diffusing its odour.

Here is a useful subject for self-examination. Who would not desire to be found at the last in Christ, and clothed in his spotless robe? But all who are in him and thus clothed, must bring forth manifest fruits of good works. Are we producing such fruits? We may, alas! be in the vineyard, and yet unfruitful. Remember that we are spared that we may improve, but that none can tell how soon the sentence may be carried into execution, "Cut it down, why cumbereth it the ground?" The humblest and weakest are safe in Christ; but the humblest and weakest in him are endeavouring to "adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour." These two God has joined inseparably,—Christ's righteousness upon us, his character within us. But to live thus following Christ, who is sufficient? "Our sufficiency is of God." And this leads us to the next important truth which we learn as to Christ's priesthood, from his mystical garment.

(3.) Not only may we learn from this robe of the

ephod that in Christ our high priest have we righteousness and sanctification, but also, that he has the fulness of the Spirit, wherby he will not only teach us, but enable us to serve and obey him. Over this robe of the ephod went, as we learn in the twenty-eighth of Exodus, the ephod itself. This order is expressed, also, in the fifth verse of the twenty-ninth chapter of that book, where God thus directs Moses : “Thou shalt take the garments, and put upon Aaron the coat, and the robe of the ephod, (*ποδήρη*—“garment down to the foot,”) and the ephod, and the breastplate”—or, as the Samaritan version expresses it, “put upon him the robe, and over it thou shalt put the ephod and the breastplate.” This breastplate, the particulars relative to the formation of which are contained in the twenty-eighth chapter, (verse 15, &c.,) was to be fastened securely to the ephod, (verse 28,) and in it were put “the Urim and the Thummim.” (verse 30.)

• Omitting, for the present, other particulars relative to the breastplate, let us consider what these two signified. It is to be remarked, that while we have in the thirty-ninth of Exodus, a description of the formation of the other parts of the dress and ornaments of the high priest, there is no account given of the fabrication of the Urim and Thummim, neither are there directions given as to the making of them ; and from this the Hebrew doctors gathered that they were

made immediately by God and given to Moses. As we are ignorant of their formation, so, also, are we of the mode in which they acted as oracles. We know that through them the will of God was communicated, and it was the opinion of the Rabbins that it continued so to be revealed as long as the Tabernacle stood. They held that the Holy Spirit spake to Israel by Urim and Thummim while the Tabernacle remained ; during the first temple by the prophets ; and during the second temple by the " Bath-kol," or the daughter of a voice.* The words Urim and Thummim signify light and perfection ; in the Septuagint they are rendered, the manifestation and the truth ; and in the Vulgate, doctrine and truth. That they have a mystical meaning relating to Christ our high priest, will be manifest if we refer to the blessing Moses gives to Levi, and which is recorded in the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, in the eighth and following verses. This will appear the more striking if we use the translation given by Bishop Horsley, and which is also, substantially, the rendering given by Ainsworth, and in consonance with the Septuagint and the Vulgate. The bishop thus renders the passage :

* It would not be suitable to the design of these pages to enter fully into all the conjectures relative to the Urim and the Thummim ; but as much as can be known about them is succinctly stated in Cruden under the word "Thummim."

8. And unto Levi he said,

Thy Thummim and thy Urim belong to the man, thy holy one,
Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
And with whom thou didst contend at the waters of Meribah.

• 9. To him who saith of his father and his mother, I have never
seen him,

Who owneth not his brethren,
And his sons he acknowledgeth not;
(But saith) Let them observe thy word,
And let them keep thy covenant.

10. They shall teach thy judgments unto Jacob,
And thy law unto Israel.

They shall place incense at thy nostrils,
And holocausts upon thy altar.

11. Bless, O Jehovah, his persevering virtue,

And be propitious to the works of his hands.

Smite the loins of them that rise against him,
And of them that hate him, that they rise no more.

Throughout the whole passage thus read, a greater than Aaron, even the Messiah, is evident. Houbigant thus explains it: "In this blessing pronounced upon Levi, the priesthood of Levi is contrasted with the future priesthood of Messiah. Hence Moses says, 'Thy Thummim and thy Urim belong to the man, thy holy one, whom thou didst tempt.' That perfection and that doctrine which thy priests carried upon them, is not thine, so as that thou shouldest have them by thyself, or impart them to others;

they belong to thy holy one,—even him whom the Lord will not suffer to see corruption; (Psa. xvi. 10,) whom thou didst tempt; even him of whom the apostle Paul speaks, saying, ‘Neither let us tempt Christ,’ (1 Cor. x. 9;) whom Moses tempted when he unbelievingly struck the rock; and Aaron together with Moses, when Moses said, ‘Can we bring water from this rock?’ He who said to his father and mother, ‘I have not known him,’ is the same who said, ‘Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother; and sister, and mother.’” (Matt. xii. 48, 50.) In this blessing, “those are acknowledged as his sons, and only those,” who “observe the word, and keep the covenant:” of such it is further taught us, in the tenth verse, that they shall be the honoured instruments of spreading the knowledge of Christ, and that they shall be constituted “an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” The eleventh verse is a prophecy, in the form of a prayer, of Christ’s firmness in carrying out his work of salvation, although he might have spared himself;* and the success of that work, as well as the final destruction of his enemies.

Evidently this whole blessing, as Ainsworth observes, “belongs chiefly to Christ;” but at present

* John x. 17, 18; Matt. xxvi. 53.

we have only to refer to the commencement of it, where it is said to Levi,

“Thy Thummim and thy Urim belong to the man, thy holy one,
Whom thou didst prove at Massah,
And with whom thou didst contend at the waters of Meribah.”

That is, thy Thummim and thy Urim belong to the Christ. Now, this we take to be a declaration of the fulness of the Spirit being in our high priest, for these words signify light and perfection—the manifestation and the truth—but these are terms peculiarly descriptive of the office and character of the third Person of the ever-blessed Trinity. He is called by our blessed Lord “the Spirit of truth,”* who shall guide us “into (*i.e.* manifest unto us) all truth,” (*i.e.* the perfection of truth.) Again he says, the Holy Ghost “shall teach you all things;” and again, “he shall receive of mine and show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.”† Now, that this true Urim and Thummim was in all fulness in Christ is evident, for he himself declared in the synagogue that the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit were in him, (Luke iv. 17—21, with Isa. lxi. 1, 2;) so also in this Revelation he is represented, in the fifth chapter and the sixth verse, as a lamb having “seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God.”

* John xiv. 17; xv. 26, and xvi. 13. † Ib. xiv. 26, and xvi. 14, 15.

Now Christ our priest has this Urim and Thummim, first, to teach his church ; but this 'we do not dwell on here, as we shall have occasion to refer hereafter more particularly to his office as our prophet ; but we observe that Christ's offices do so unite themselves one with the other, that though, for distinctness' sake, we must notice them separately, yet, in noticing each, we must remember that he is all—priest, king, and prophet, his priesthood being both regal and prophetical. But Christ has the fulness of the spirit not only to teach us, but as our priest to help us towards sanctification and obedience. This is our great comfort and strength in our painful, and often defeated endeavours to "fight the good fight of faith." Jesus by his spirit is with his people, even to the end of the world, for he has promised not to leave us comfortless, but to come unto, and take up his abode with us ; and thus, by his indwelling, we shall come off "more than conquerors," for "greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the world."*

(4.) But we have seen that the Urim and Thummim were placed in the breast-plate, which is called "the breast-plate of judgment :" hence this part of the Jewish high priest's ornaments signified judicial power, which power we know they exercised. This, therefore, shadows forth part of the kingly authority of our royal priest ; and the consideration of this

¹ John iv. 4.

power will consequently belong more properly to the observations we shall have to make upon Christ as our king. As we have just observed, however, the three offices of our Saviour are inseparable in fact, though we may profitably consider them separately; and the Aaronical priesthood being the most eminent type of Christ's priesthood, did contain it, as was divinely instituted, kingly and prophetical, as well as sacerdotal dignity, power, and gifts.

(5.) We observe further, that the breast-plate contained in it twelve precious stones, engraved with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, and was to be carefully fastened to the ephod, that it might not be loosed; and Aaron was to bear these names "in the breast-plate of judgment upon his heart," when he went into "the holy place, for a memorial before the Lord continually." (Exod. xxviii. 17—29.) One cannot read this passage without being struck with the agreement between the stones here named, and those mentioned in the twenty-first of Revelation, as the foundation-stones of the new Jerusalem. It will, however, be sufficient for us here to observe, that by these valuable stones engraved with the names of the tribes, borne on Aaron's heart in the holy place before the Lord continually, is figured the preciousness of his people to Christ; the love he has to them; and how that he ever liveth in the true "holy place," even "in heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us."

The prophet Malachi expresses how precious Christ's people are to him by a similar figure, comparing them to jewels.* So also does our blessed Saviour when he compares his church to a treasure hid in a field, to obtain which the finder goeth and selleth all that he hath, and purchases the field. And again, when he compares the kingdom of heaven to "a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it."† Christ has purchased his people with his precious blood; they are the "travail of his soul," the reward of his sufferings, and consequently "right dear" unto him; and he will keep them, therefore, unto salvation. He has laid down his life for his sheep, and they shall therefore "never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of his hand."

His infinite and eternal love is also very strikingly shown us, when it is said that these engraved names were borne in the holy place by Aaron upon his heart, for a continual memorial before the Lord. Hence, once more, we learn that Christ in glory is the same that he was in humiliation. His change of state has not altered his character. Having in the world loved his own, he loves them still in glory. The names of his people are engraven on his heart, and his occupation now is, in the true holy place, ever to make intercession for them. Hence we find the

* Mal. iii. 17.

† Matt. xiii. 44—16.

church-praying, "Set me as a seal upon thine heart;"* and Christ assures his people of his love by a somewhat similar figure, saying, "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."† The heart is the seat of love and sympathy; and by this figure we are therefore assured of the love and sympathy of Christ to his people. "In all their afflictions he is afflicted;" and what touches them touches him. How delightful, also, to know that this our high priest, full of love and sympathy, stands continually as our memorial before the Lord. He presents himself for us, not ashamed to acknowledge us, saying, "Behold I and the children which God hath given me."‡ What confidence may not this give us in coming to God! When we feel how cold and wandering are our prayers, how sinful our lives, and how inapt and unfit both we and our services are to come into the presence of the High and Holy One, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity; let us, then, "look unto Jesus"—let us behold him in glory as our high priest "ever living to make intercession for us"—contemplate him who knows "the weakness of the flesh," even though the "spirit be willing," and

* Song viii. 6. † Isa. xl ix. 15, 16. ‡ Heb. ii. 13.

who on that account graciously excused his sleeping disciples,* now filled with love, and feeling the same sympathy as our mighty "days-man,"†—our brother yet Jehovah's fellow,‡—who stands to plead our cause, to cleanse in his own blood ourselves and our services, and thus present us and them with acceptance before the throne. Oh, let us rejoice in him, while we have no confidence in the flesh!

(6.) But, lastly, we observe that the ephod had also attached to it two onyx stones, containing engraved upon them "the names of the children of Israel." They were to be put upon "the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." (Exod. xxviii. 9—12.) This portion of Aaron's ornaments appears to figure more especially the kingly character of Christ's priesthood, and therefore shall be only briefly noticed. Bearing the names upon his shoulders represents the kingly office of Christ, and his government over and for his people; for thus the prophet Isaiah predicts the kinghood of Christ, saying, "The government shall be upon his shoulder;" § the shoulder being the part on which a weight is best sustained. Hence the church, in that passage in the Song of Solomon in which she supplicates, as a pledge of love, to be set as a seal upon her

* Matt. xxvi. 41. † Job ix. 33. ‡ Zech. xiii. 7. § Isa. ix. 6.

beloved's heart, also solicits his government to be extended over her, saying, "Set me as a seal upon thine arm." (Song viii. .6.) And these stones are said to be "memorial unto the children of Israel," that is, to remind them that Christ was their king, even as those other twelve precious stones on the high priest's heart were "memorial to the Lord," to "put him in remembrance" * of those given to Christ for his people.

So much, reader, may we learn from the robe, clothed in which our Saviour appeared in glory to St. John—"the garment down to his foot." He is in his glory, carrying out for us the work he begun in his humiliation. He humbled himself to redeem us, he is exalted to save us. He is by this robe marked as our high priest, nor are his offices of king and prophet undistinguished by it. He has been called of God to the priesthood, for he is his "beloved Son, in whom he is well pleased;" he is adapted to the office, for he took part of our nature; and he has a sacrifice to offer, even that of himself. As our priest, he has wrought out righteousness for us, and he sanctifies us. He has the fulness of the Spirit to teach and work righteousness in us. To him also pertains the kingly power of judgment, for the father hath given it to him "because he is the Son of man." He

* Isa. xliii. 26.

has passed through the heavens, as the high priest used to do into the holiest, to make intercession “for all that come unto God by him ;” and even there, at the right hand of power, he bears his people in his heart, full of sympathy and love towards them. And finally, we have seen also that he bears his people upon his shoulders ; that is, he is their governor, ordering all things in heaven and earth for their good, and shall yet be fully manifested as their king. May we know him experimentally in all these parts of his glorious priesthood, and, rejoicing in its perfection, rest upon him as our only hope and peaceful refuge !

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR HIGH PRIEST.

THE GIRDLE.

"And girt about the paps with a golden girdle."—Verse 13.

THE apostle records, in addition to the robe with which Jesus appeared as clad, that he was “girt about the paps with a golden girdle.” This particular is mentioned in order further to instruct us as to the excellency of the priesthood of our Saviour. We have before observed how much the revelation given to Daniel agrees with this vouchsafed to St. John, and how similar the appearance of the being giving these revelations. This similarity of appearance is plainly marked in their dress, and, amongst the other particulars, also, in this girdle. Thus, in the tenth chapter of the book of that prophet and in the fifth verse, we learn that the being whose appearance Daniel there records, had “his loins girded with fine gold of Uphaz.”

Referring again to the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus, we find, among the directions as to the formation of the robes and ornaments of the high priest, a command relative to the construction of his girdle. In the eighth verse of that chapter, God directs that, “the curious (*i. e.* embroidered—*marg.*) girdle of the ephod, which is upon it, shall be made of the same, according to the work thereof; even of gold, of blue and purple, and scarlet, and fine-twined linen.” And when Aaron was arrayed in his garments, “the robe of the ephod, and the ephod, and the breast-plate,” with its contents, Moses was over all to “gird him with the curious girdle of the ephod.”* There is another girdle also spoken of in the twenty-eighth of Exodus (verse 39) which differed from the former, chiefly in two respects: first, it was beneath the robe of the ephod, and consequently not visible, whereas the former was over it, and consequently might be seen; and, besides, the inner girdle had no gold in its composition, but the outer one had; whence it is called the golden girdle. With the first of these, the girdle that was visible and golden, Jesus is here represented as girt.

The account given us by some of the Jewish doctors will illustrate the mode of wearing the various priestly robes, and the expression of St. John when he says, “girt about the paps with a

* Exod. xxix. 5.

golden girdle." Thus one of them, describing the order of robing, says, " He (the high priest) put on the robe, and over the robe the ephod and breast-plate, and girded himself with the curious girdle of the ephod over the robe, and under the breast-plate." The same writer describes this girdle as being part, in fact, of the ephod, saying, " The ephod had, as it were, two bands going from it, in the weaving, on this side and on that, with which they girded it: and they are called the curious girdle of the ephod." Again, " The curious girdle of the ephod was *tied upon his heart*, under the breast-plate." Josephus also tells us, that " the girdle was sewed to the breast-plate," and that it was of various colours, and mixed with gold.*

Now, seeing that the legal high priest wore round his breast a golden girdle, and that Christ, here standing before the apostle as our great high priest, is described as being similarly girt, we have to inquire what particulars as to our Saviour's priestly character were signified by, and may be learned from this girdle. Now as to the girdle itself, we shall not stop to dwell upon its various colours, which it had in common with the ephod, and which signified the

* As the whole of the remarks of Josephus upon the robes of the high priest will tend much to illustrate the observations in the preceding chapter, and in this, and in the next, they will be found added at the end of this chapter.

general perfection of Christ's work; but we shall notice only the points especially brought before us by the apostle, namely, that it fastened to the body the robe of the ephod, or "garment down to the foot," and therefore also fastened on all that we have seen were connected with this robe; and that it was composed of gold.

1. Considering this girdle in these respects, we may, in the first place, gather from it the efficiency and readiness of Christ in his office as our high priest. Everywhere throughout Scripture we find a gilded state used to represent strength and preparedness.* Christ accordingly is represented as "walking in the midst of the candlesticks" (chap. ii. 1,) so girt, to show his efficiency and readiness to administer to the wants and necessities of the church. There is no danger too great for him; and to help in "every time of need" he is ever ready. In the midst of his church he is "a very present help in time of trouble." To comfort Stephen with these truths, and us also, we find that, when that martyr's blood was shed, Jesus, who is for the most part represented as "sitting at the right hand of God," appeared to him as "the Son of man, standing on the right hand of God;" ready as well as able to

* We give a few examples: Exod. xii. 11; Isa. v. 27, and xxii. 21; Luke xii. 35; John xxi. 18; Eph. vi. 14.

help him. Thus considering our High Priest, we may, to our great comfort, apply to ourselves the whole of the splendid and triumphant language of the Psalmist as found in the forty-sixth Psalm; we need not to fear temporal or spiritual dangers or calamities, for our high priest is with us, in the midst of us, and he will "help us, and that right early." Let us therefore "be still, and know that he (even Jesus) is God—that the Lord of hosts is with us ; that the God of Jacob is our refuge." Hence, let us be assured that trials and sorrows, as they are never sent without a gracious purpose, so they will never be made heavier, or continue longer than is absolutely necessary for us. Our High Priest, who is touched with our afflictions, is able and ready to help us in time of need ; but he is infinitely wise as well as powerful and compassionate, and therefore he allows sometimes our trials to last, and even appears to hide his face, in order that the good he designs for us may be wrought in us. He will not leave us longer in the furnace than is necessary to purify us, but *he will* continue us in it *so long*, however grievous it may seem to flesh and blood. To be assured of this is most necessary and consolatory. "Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus ;" yet, when he heard of their affliction, "he abode two days still in the place where he was," even until Lazarus was dead and in his grave. This did not

look like love, and yet it was love.* Let not enduring affliction cause us for a moment to doubt the mercy of our Saviour. Let us come rather to his footstool, and pour out our hearts before him, and he will relieve us at the right moment; for he will not suffer us to be “swallowed up with overmuch sorrow.” Let us not

“ Judge the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust him for his grace;
Behind a frowning providence
. He hides a smiling face.”

We know his sympathy, his ability, and his readiness to relieve us; let us trust to his wisdom that he will do it at the right moment, at the time most suitable; and let us ever offer up his prayer, “Not my will, but thine be done!”

2. But we shall be more strengthened in this Christian resignation to the hand of God, when we consider his faithfulness, which is also figured by this golden girdle. We find the girdle used to represent this quality in our high priest by the prophet Isaiah in the eleventh chapter and fifth verse, where he says of the Branch which grew out of the roots of Jesse, that “righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.” Here righteousness is evidently significant of the same quality as that expressed in the

* John xi. 5, 6.

latter hemistich by the term faithfulness; and both convey the assurance of the truthfulness, the unchangeableness of Christ—that he is the faithful one, the “same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.” To express this same quality the apostle employs the same figure, when he teaches Christians to have their “loins girt about with truth.”* Considering, then, the faithfulness of our high priest as noted by his golden girdle, and uniting this with the other qualities we have learned to be in him, we may the more peacefully rest upon him at all times; for “God is faithful,” and, consequently, will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able to bear; but will, with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it.†

3. But to lead us the more to rest on Jesus in every time of need, and sorrow, and trial, in addition to the assurance of his sympathy, his ability, his readiness, and his faithfulness, we may also learn from this golden girdle, his infinite love. If we refer to St. Paul’s epistle to the Colossians, in the third chapter, we find him speaking of sinful and holy habits under the figure of clothing; and having exhorted us to put off the former, he then teaches us to “put on the new man;” and again, to “put on mercy, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering,” (verse 12;) and then he goes on to

* Eph. vi. 14.

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

add, in the fourteenth verse—"and above all these things (as so many robes) put on *love, which is the bond of perfectness.*" That is, love is the girdle which gives perfection to all other graces; for if all others were possessed, and it absent, they would be like an ungirded dress, and of no value.* Taking this girdle on our Saviour in this meaning, it is the emblem of his love, which is the perfecting of his character towards us, even as "God is love." Adding this to the rest,—and "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, considering attentively the apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus,"—do we not see in him every beauty that we should admire, and all fulness that we may desire? "Seeing, then, that we have such a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, let us hold fast our profession: for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But we may contemplate this girdle, as the emblem of the love of Jesus, in another point of view. The golden girdle on Aaron and his successors held on and compacted the robe of the ephod—the "garment down to the foot," and the ephod with its contents. Christ is represented here as having his robe also so bound to his body and compacted. Now, we have seen that Christ's body represents his mystical body,

* 1 Cor. xiii. See the Collect for Quinquagesima.

that is, his faithful people; and that his robe down to his feet signifies his righteousness, with which, as with a wedding-garment, his people are clothed; while this golden girdle, with which he is girded, figures his love: hence it is here taught us, that it is the divine love of the Saviour which binds his righteousness around his spiritual members. The girdle is of gold, representing the excellency of the Redeemer's love, "which passeth knowledge,"—love infinite, and extended to his enemies. This love is our security. It, as a girdle, binds us "up in the bundle of life" * with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, making us one with him, his love being our refuge and defence. Let us, then, fly to this love to clothe us with this righteousness. Convinced of our sins and danger, let us come to him with the penitent spirit and humble language of the prodigal, saying, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son;" and he, like that kind parent, will with overflowing love hasten to meet us, bringing forth the best robe, even that of his own righteousness, and putting it upon us, rejoicing over us with love, as those that were lost but now are found; who were dead, but are again alive. Jesus in glory, amidst his church, encircled with eternal love, thus "waits to be gracious."

* 1 Sam. xxv. 29.

Now, as Jesus is our example as well as our priest, we may also apply this girdle practically to ourselves. We should ever be in a state of readiness to serve, and to meet God. Thus St. Peter exhorts us : “ Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”* So also our blessed Master : “ Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning ; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding ; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching.”† To run our race we must gird our loins, so that we be not entangled by any besetting sin, but be prepared for every good word and work, with our eyes “ looking unto Jesus.”‡

Again : we, like our Master, must be girded with truth ; for thus St. Paul exhorts us : “ Stand, having your loins girt about with truth.”§ In other words, we must be sincere, in earnest, and constant in our religion. Without this the greatest clearness of doctrinal views will be quite ineffectual ; and we shall be “ unstable in all our ways,” “ like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.” This grace is

* 1 Pet. i. 13. † Luke xii. 35—40. ‡ Heb. xii. 1, 2.

§ Eph. vi. 14.

expressed by the apostle in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians and fourteenth and fifteenth verses, when he says, let us “be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth (being sincere—*marg.*) in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ.”

Further: as love is the girdle of Jesus, so it also must be ours. This we have already seen the apostle teaching us in the third chapter of his epistle to the Colossians, and fourteenth verse. Love is indeed the grand badge which ought to distinguish the people of Christ. “By this shall all men know,” says our Saviour, “that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” It is to be love after the example of our high priest; for he says, “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.”* And the beloved disciple, who caught so much of his Master’s spirit, urges such love upon us, saying, “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”†

Reader! let us pray that this “mind may be in us, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Let us “love one another with pure hearts fervently,” and prove it by

* John xiii. 34, 35.

† 1 John iv. 11.

active benevolence towards the souls and bodies of our brethren. Let us pray that Jesus our high priest would work in us his own likeness, that while we rest on his merits, we may be made “meet for the inheritance of the saints in light:” and thus we shall have learned rightly “the truth as it is in Jesus.”

We add here extracts from Josephus on the dress of the high priest, as illustrative of some of the observations in the two preceding chapters, as well as some that will be found in the next. Having noticed the garments of the priests, he goes on to observe: “The high priest is indeed adorned with the same garments that we have described, without abating one; only over these he puts on a vestment of a blue colour. This also is a long robe, *reaching to his feet*, and is tied round with a girdle, embroidered with the same colours and flowers as the former, with a mixture of gold interwoven. To the bottom of this garment are hung fringes, in colour like pomegranates, with golden bells, by a curious and beautiful contrivance; so that between two bells hangs a pomegranate, and between two pomegranates a bell. Now this vesture was not composed of two pieces, nor was it sewed together upon the shoulders and the sides, but it was one long vestment, so woven as to have an aperture for the neck.” He then goes on to describe the ephod itself, and the breast-plate, and the stones with the names of the tribes engraved upon them, and the manner in which these were fastened together; after which he adds, “There was also a girdle sewed to the breast-plate, which was of the fore-mentioned colours, with gold intermixed.” Again he adds: “The high

priest's mitre was wrought like that of all other priests and on the forehead was a golden plate, which had inscribed upon it the name of God in sacred characters."

These extracts are taken from the seventh chapter of the third book of his "Antiquities of the Jews;" the following are from the fifth chapter of the fifth book of "The Wars." When the high priest officiated, besides other robes, he put on "a blue garment, round, *without seam*, with fringe work, and reaching to the feet. There were also golden bells that hung upon the fringes, and pomegranates intermixed among them. . . But that girdle which *tied the garment to the breast*, was embroidered with five rows of various colours of gold, and purple, and scarlet, as also fine linen and blue; with which colours the veils of the temple were embroidered also." He again describes the ephod, with its engraved stones, and adds: "A mitre also of *fine linen encompassed the head*, which was tied by a blue riband, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraved the sacred name, consisting of four vowels. However, the high priest did not wear these garments at other times, but a more plain habit; he only wore them when *he went into the most sacred part of the temple*, which he did once a year, on that day when our custom is for all of us to keep a fast to God."

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR HIGH PRIEST.

THE MITRE.

"His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow."

Verse 14.

IN that part of the description of the appearance of the Son of man amidst his churches which we have already noticed, it appears evident that he is set forth as our high priest "passed into the heavens." We have seen him represented as arrayed in the robes which God ordained should be worn by the Israelitish high priests, thus teaching us that he fulfils what they shadowed. Hence we may learn, that the very exact particulars as to the dress of those high priests which God gave to Moses were so minutely given, not only in order that the worship of God in his sanctuary should be conducted "decently and in order," but also, and far rather, to signify and foreshadow the perfection of the eternal priesthood of Christ Jesus. The body-covering robe

of the ephod and its curious girdle, which formed part of the official dress of the legal high priests, we have seen that Christ appeared as wearing when he manifested himself to St. John in his glory; we have endeavoured to point out the most comfortable truths that may be derived therefrom.

The particular which now comes under consideration is not so plainly referable to decorations of the Aaronical high priests, as those we have already considered; but if we are manifestly pursuing, so far, the right track, this will be a strong reason for supposing that we are to recur to the same type for the signification of the particular now before us. And in that type we shall find something corresponding to the description, "his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow."

Before, however, we examine to what part of the priestly adornments these words relate, we would refer to a passage in the prophecy of Daniel. We shall not indeed find any thing parallel to these words in the chapter of that book to which we have before and shall again refer, as so remarkably agreeing with what St. John in this chapter records; but if we turn to the seventh chapter of Daniel, we shall find in it a relation of magnificent events very manifestly the same as described by St. John in the fifth chapter of this Revelation. However, we do not refer to it now to trace this connection, but to notice that, in

the ninth verse, it is said of the “ancient of days,” or God the father, that “the hair of his head was like the pure wool.” Here let us observe, in passing, that the same symbol which is here given to the “ancient of days,” is by St. John given to the “Son of man.” Hence we may learn that Christ is the manifestation of the Godhead, in such a manner as that he who hath seen the Son hath seen the Father also.* Whatever forms, appearances, names or attributes, we find applied to the Father, are also given to the Son, who is “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person;”† whom, therefore, all men are to honour even as they honour the Father.‡

But, with more immediate reference to the present subject, let us observe that, when it is said of the “ancient of days” “that the hair of his head was like the pure wool,” it is evidently a figurative expression, and is intended to convey to our senses some faint idea of the glory of God, and, inasmuch as this glory is upon his head, it is especially because of his infinitely glorious wisdom. Thus, also, in the passage under consideration, when the apostle says that Christ appeared, “his head and hair being white like wool, as white as snow,” we are not to take the words literally, but we are to consider them as intended to convey to us the glory that shone around his head, and especially

* John xii. 45, and xiv. 9. † Heb. i. 3. ‡ John v. 23.

the glory of his wisdom. Viewing these words thus, and bearing in mind that Christ is here represented as decked in the priestly robes, we may now refer to the typical high priest, and we shall find that he wore upon his head an ornament figuring this glory. Let us turn once more to the twenty-eighth chapter of Exodus. In the thirty-sixth and two following verses, we read this command given to Moses : “ Thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, **HOLINESS TO THE LORD.** And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre ; upon the fore-front of the mitre it shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron’s forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts ; and it shall be always upon his forehead, that they may be accepted before the **LORD.**” Here is direction given that a plate of gold, engraved as commanded, should be fixed upon the fore-front of the mitre, even upon Aaron’s forehead ; and a reason is also given for this ordinance. Now, if we refer to the thirty-ninth chapter of Exodus, where we read that all that God commanded was made accordingly, we find it said, in the twenty-eighth verse, that they made “ *a mitre of fine linen ;* ” and then in the thirtieth and following verses, that “ they made the plate of the holy crown of pure gold, and wrote upon it a writing, like to the engravings of

a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And they tied upon it a lace of blue, to fasten it on high upon the mitre; as the LORD commanded Moses." Here we learn in addition, that the mitre, called "the holy crown," was of fine linen, and, therefore, with its golden plate, would present a white and dazzling appearance, similar to the appearance here attributed to the head of the Son of man.*

There are also other passages in Scripture which appear to have reference to this mitre. We have already, in considering the robe of Christ, referred to the third chapter of the prophet Zechariah. There we have seen Joshua the high priest, standing as a type of "the BRANCH," and clothed in a body-covering garment; and it is added in the fifth verse, "I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head." Now, as we have seen in the twenty-eighth of Exodus that this mitre was engraved with an inscription, and also had reference to the bearing of the iniquity of the people by the high priest, and thus, consequently, taking it away; so here the same connection is preserved, for in the ninth verse we read: "Behold, I will engrave the engraving thereof, (*i. e.*, the engrav-

* See the extract already given from Josephus, where he says, "A mitre of fine linen encompassed the head, which was tied by a blue riband, about which there was another golden crown, in which was engraved the sacred name."

ing of the mitre, Holiness to the Lord,) saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." *

There appears to be further allusion, and a very important one, to this gold-fronted mitre, which adorned the head of the high priest, in the sixth chapter of this same prophet Zechariah, where, in the eleventh and following verses, we find it thus commanded: "Take silver and gold,* and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest; and speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying; Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Here these golden crowns set upon Joshua the high priest, are expressly stated to have reference to the BRANCH, that is, "the offspring of David;" and to indicate the royalty of his priesthood, for "he shall be a priest upon his throne:" and, agreeing with this royalty of priesthood, we find, in a passage we have already quoted from the book of Exodus, that the mitre is called, "the holy crown,"* and that its plate was

* Exod. xxxix. 30. *

made of pure gold. Now, the expression “ holy crown,” indicates a priest who is crowned; in other words, “ a priest upon his throne.”

On the mount of transfiguration, when for a moment Jesus, as it were, put off the weeds of his humiliation, and arrayed himself in the robes of his royalty, “ his face,” we read, “ did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light;” expressions used to signify the surpassing splendour of his appearance. And when he appeared here to St. John invested for ever with the glory which he has acquired to his humanity by his humiliation, we read, “ his head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow;” that is, his appearance was most glorious. Standing here in the robe and with the girdle of our high priest, he also has his head crowned with a mitre like that of the priesthood, white and dazzling, being formed of fine linen and fine gold.

We now shall proceed to consider what we may learn, exclusive of what it implies of his kinghood, from our Lord appearing invested with this adornment of the high priesthood.

1. We have seen that upon the fore-front of the mitre there was fixed a plate of pure gold, having engraved upon it, “ HOLINESS TO THE LORD.” Hereby we may consider that our Saviour’s holiness and consecration to God was prefigured. He is represented here as wearing it in order to teach us

that he, our great High Priest, is “the holy one of God;” for he was the consecrated lamb, “without blemish and without spot;” “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners,” even “such an high priest as became us.”* Of his perfect holiness we have the most decisive proof given us by the temptations to which he was exposed, and his triumph over them. In them we behold the great Adversary, with all the acquired subtlety of four thousand years’ experience and success, attacking the Captain of our salvation, but assaulting him in vain. Satan found not anything in him upon which he might rest his temptation. Triumphant over the first Adam and all his posterity hitherto, here his career was stayed, here his conquests were at an end. As the billow breaks powerless against the rock, so Satan was repelled by our great Deliverer. By our Saviour’s triumph, his holiness was manifested, as well as our enemy defeated for us. Here, then, beholding the unspotted holiness of our High Priest, we may learn to rest with the utmost confidence upon his atonement.

2. But further, we have seen that Aaron, by wearing this mitre with its plate of gold thus inscribed, was said to “bear the iniquity of the ~~holy things~~ which the children of Israel did hallow in all their holy gifts;” and that he was always to have it, when

* Heb. vii. 26. •

he ministered for the people, upon his forehead, in order that they might be accepted before the Lord. This prefigured Christ as our high priest acting as the Mediator of his people. Here he appears in glory with this ornament upon his head, teaching us that he is gone into heaven “now to appear in the presence of God for us,” and that he “ever liveth to make intercession”* for us. He, in the true holy place, bears the iniquity of our holy things; he appears for us, and we are accepted in him. This is a truth we must ever keep in mind; for our persons, our best works, services and prayers, even our holiest things, are imperfect and sin-stained; they, therefore, to be accepted, must be presented through “the Holy One,” our “Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Looking upon the face of his Anointed, “his beloved Son in whom he is well pleased,” God is well pleased with his people, and graciously receives us and our imperfect services. Through Jesus, therefore, we may boldly approach the throne, which, through him, is a throne of grace, saying Abba, Father. We cannot feel too humbly as to ourselves, too confidently as to him. Do we know ourselves to be “vile earth and miserable sinners?” Do we feel our prayers and services to be cold and dead, imperfect and defiled? Let our comfort be, that our High Priest bears the iniquity that cleaves

* Heb. ix. 24, and vii. 25.

even to our holy things, and that he, all holiness to the Lord, appears for us, and presents us and our services in his own merits before the Most High.

3. It has further appeared that this mitre was called "the holy crown;" so that it intimated the fact that the Aaronical priesthood was also in many respects a regal priesthood—they fulfilling many duties usually considered as peculiarly belonging to the office of a king. This significance of the mitre, we have also seen, may be gathered from the part of the prophecy of Zechariah to which we have referred. In this respect also Christ was foreshadowed; and here wearing this mitre, he is marked to be the King as well as High Priest of his church. The crown of universal sovereignty belongs to him, for he shall reign until all enemies are put under his feet. Now, indeed, "we see not yet all things put under him," although he is already "crowned with glory and honour,"*—in other words, Christ has not yet fully entered upon his kingly office on earth, though he is already exalted above "principalities and powers," even to the right hand of the Majesty on high, where he sits in glory, "expecting" the time appointed of the Father, when he shall have his foes made his footstool.† The time when his royalty on

* Heb. ii., 8, 9.

† Psa. cx. 1, with Heb. x. 12, 13. To these passages we shall have occasion to recur again in the following pages.

earth shall commence is announced in the nineteenth chapter of this Revelation, where he is represented as coming forth to “judge and make war;” “crowned with many crowns;” to smite the nations, and to rule them with a rod of iron; vindicating to himself the title, and manifesting to all that he is “**KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**” But Jesus as king we are yet to consider; he is now more especially before us as our priest. We have observed, that his triple-unity of offices cannot be separated any more than the triunity of the Godhead, but they may and ought to be distinguished; and therefore we have here said so much as to his kinghood because it is inseparable from his priesthood; but we shall not enlarge at present upon it, because we have yet to consider it as distinguished from the latter. •

4. There is another truth as to our high priest which, it appears, may be learned from this portion of the legal high priest's typical dress. This mitre, with its golden plate and its inscription, was upon the forehead of the high priest. Now, the head is

The dome of thought, the palace of the soul;

it is the seat of the intellect; and being thus inscribed with “**HOLINESS TO THE LORD,**” it will represent that Christ was himself entirely and reasonably devoted to his heavenly Father, in opposition to the irrational typical sacrifices; and that he, as our high

priest, has redeemed and sanctified, and therefore requires the service of man's reason, or his intellectual powers, as well as his moral feelings. The state of man's intellect since the fall, and without Christ, in relation to divine things, is very distinctly taught us in the Holy Scriptures. We are said not to know the way of peace, and not only is the heart faint, but the "whole head is sick," the entire affections corrupt, and the intellect depraved.* Thus also our blessed Lord declares that the things of God were hidden from the wise and prudent, but revealed to babes.† St. Paul tells us that the heathen, professing themselves to be wise, became fools;‡ and again he says, "the world by wisdom knew not God."§ But in the fourth chapter of his epistle to the Ephesians, in the seventeenth and following verses, he depicts both the blinded state of man's intellect without Christ, and our enlightenment through him, saying, "This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, *having the understanding darkened*, being alienated from the life of God *through the ignorance that is in them*, because of the blindness of their heart... *But ye have not so learned Christ*, if so be that *ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth*

* Isa. lix. 8, and i. 5.

† Matt. xi. 25—27.

‡ Rom. i. 22.

§ 1 Cor. i. 21.

is in Jesus." And this teaching he expresses in the third chapter of the epistle to the Colossians, and tenth verse, as the putting on of the new man, "which is *renewed in knowledge* after the image of Him that created him."

It is evident that, in divine things, the intellect of man requires enlightenment, and it is evident also that this enlightenment is by Jesus Christ. He has redeemed the intellect, as he has the affections, from the curse—hence he is the light of the world ; and he also sanctifies the intellect as he does the affections; so that the Christian, in all his mental exertions, exercises, and enjoyments, endeavours to have God before and with him. God's glory is the great end he has in view in everything, and in all things he beholds God's hand. He truly

" Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
Sermons in stones, and good in every thing"

With the Christian philosopher he can say, "Thy creatures have been my books, but much more thy Scriptures ; I have sought thee in the garden, in the field, and in the groves, but I have found thee in thy temples." But this redemption, sanctification, and enlightenment of the intellect by Christ our High Priest, thus figured here, is another example how our Saviour's three offices are united ; for this, though thus immediately connected with his priestly office, does more especially belong to his office as our

Prophet, to which office we shall hereafter have our attention directed.

5. This mitre, with its inscription of " HOLINESS TO THE LORD," we may, finally, consider as prefiguring the great result of the work of our High Priest. We are ever to view Christ as the second great head of the human family, Adam being the first. Now, the first Adam was created holy to the Lord, and presided over a world of holiness and happiness ; he transgressing, defiled his holy crown and fell under the curse, dragging all creation down with him ; so that the very ground is cursed for man's sake, and all creation " groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." " The second Adam, the Lord from heaven," entered also into the world holy to the Lord, and such he continued to the end ; and thus he has become the great Restorer,

" In whom the tribes of Adam boast,
More glories than their father lost."

The great result of all the Redeemer's work shall be, the removal of sin and the curse, and the restoration of man and all creation to a state of holiness, happiness, and glory. This is clearly foretold in sacred writ. The eleventh chapter of Isaiah distinctly predicts such " restoration of all things," and adds, as the cause of it, " for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the **Lord**, as the waters cover the sea." We have seen, also, that the prophet

Zechariah has evident allusion to this priestly mitre with its sacred inscription, placed on Joshua the high priest as a type of "the Branch." And we find that, in the last chapter of his prophecy, where he predicts the second coming of Christ, the deliverance of Jerusalem, the destruction of God's enemies, and the universal knowledge and worship of Jehovah, he leads us to connect this type with the universal consecration of all things in the latter days. He shows that the result of Christ's priesthood shall be universal holiness, saying, in the two last verses of that chapter, "In that day shall there be upon the bells (bridles, *marg.*) of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts . . . and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts." Thus Christ, "the holy one of God," shall restore holiness to the earth, for this is the great end of his priesthood, and thus bring to pass the saying that is written, "There shall be no more curse."*

Having thus noted what we may learn as to Christ our high priest now in glory from the emblem under consideration, and seen what blessed truths it teaches, and how full of comfort they are, let us now proceed

* Rev. xxii. 3.

to observe some practical lessons we may hence deduce.

(1.) In the first place, then, let us remember the very important truth already noted, that Christ is not only our Saviour, but also our example. Hence, whatever grace is to be found in him, must be copied in measure in his people; and to whatever he has attained, his people, in measure, may hope and should aim to reach. To them Christ imputes his righteousness, imparts his character, and will make them partakers of his dignity. He, out of his infinite love, makes them prophets, “priests and kings unto God and his Father.” Such honour he promises to his people in the conclusion of the third chapter of this book, saying, “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” Thus also the redeemed, in the fifth chapter and tenth verse, are represented as rejoicing, and saying, thou “hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth;” and, in agreement with these things, St. Peter calls believers a “royal priesthood.” Christ, therefore, will make his people partakers of his dignity; “such honour have all his saints.”* But when he gives glory, he also, and first, gives grace. Whom he raises to his throne, he fits for this high

* Psa. cxlix. 7—9.

station. When he lifts up mean men to sit above heavenly principalities and powers, even to "inherit the throne of glory," he first gives and forms in them a character suitable to this high dignity: for without this, indeed, such exaltation would not be productive of good or happiness. Hence, therefore, to those with whom he shares his throne, he communicates his character; accordingly we find the apostle when he calls God's people "a royal priesthood," adds also that they are "an holy nation."* This mitre, we have seen, has reference to both Christ's dignity and holiness, being called the "*holy crown*"; and as implying a participation in both, we find that believers are described as distinguished by a forehead mark like that which is represented as adorning Immanuel's brow. Turning to the third chapter of this book, there, in the twelfth verse, we find our Saviour promising that, on him that overcometh, he will "write his new name;" as also he promises in the seventeenth verse of the second chapter, that to the faithful he will give "a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it." Now this new name of Christ's, thus written upon and given to his people, is "**HOLINESS TO THE LORD;**" for this was the title acquired by him during his servitude on earth as the man Christ Jesus; and to acquire it he came,

* 1 Pet. ii. 9.

declaring this his consecration to God, saying, " Lo, I come to do thy will, O God."

(2.) But we may learn also from this emblem that, in particular, our intellect must be sanctified, or, as the apostle expresses it, that our service to God must be a "reasonable service." We have already noticed that it was the forehead, the seat of reason, which had upon it the golden plate engraved with the words, "**HOLINESS TO THE LOR^D**," and that this implied the work of Christ relative to the intellectual part of our nature. Now we find, that the new name which is represented as written on God's people, and which we have taken to mean this title of consecration, is represented as inscribed upon their foreheads. In the ninth chapter of Ezekiel and the fourth verse, we read that the Lord directed that a mark should be set "upon the foreheads of the men" that sighed and that cried for all the abominations that were done in Jerusalem. So also in the seventh chapter of the Revelation and third verse, it is said, " Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads." And not only do we find that this mark is represented as set upon the people of God on earth, but also that, even like their Lord, they are in glory adorned with the same forehead stamp of holiness. Thus we read in the fourteenth chapter of this book and the first verse, where the

apostle tells us of a glimpse which was given him of "the general assembly and church of the first-born," that, "Lo, the Lamb stood upon Mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name *written in their foreheads.*" And again, in the last chapter and the fourth verse, the perfect condition of the redeemed in the future state is thus described: "they," that is, the servants of God, "shall see his face, *and his name shall be in their foreheads.*"

(3.) Further, we may learn from these things, that believers are called to be holy. This is the end of our salvation. "He hath saved us, and called us with an holy vocation." He hath "predestined us to be conformed to the image of his Son." As Jesus our example was "**HOLINESS TO THE LORD,**" such, too, should be our aim. Holiness is the grand characteristic of the rest that remains for the people of God, and nothing that is defiled can enter there. It will be "a new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." All things therein shall have a holy tendency; "**HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD** shall be upon the bridles of the horses."* To this state of blissful holiness we cannot reach hereafter unless we are now made meet for it on earth. The stones which shall form that glorious holy temple, must be prepared here for their future places in that

* Zech. xiv. 20, 21.

building.* "Without holiness no man can see the Lord." "Holiness" saith the Psalmist, "becometh thine house for ever." Seeing, then, that this sin-stained world is passing away, and an holy and eternal world daily drawing nearer to us, "what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for, and hastening unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat!" He who hath saved us, called us, gone to prepare a place for us, and who will return to take us, that where he is we may be also—he is holy; and therefore as he was and is, such it is right and necessary we should be.

Not only let us follow after holiness of affections but holiness of mind, which are in truth inseparable. We must become here on earth prophets, knowing God in Christ Jesus, and able to teach others. The natural "ignorance of God that is in us" we must have removed by the teaching of our Prophet-priest, so that we may know the "only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent." "Made wise unto salvation" through him, we must consecrate our powers of mind to his service; for of the mind as well as the heart it is true, that it is "not our own," but is Christ's, being by him "bought with a price,"

even his most precious blood. Thus sanctified in intellect, we can with joy look forward to that glorious time when we shall no longer "know in part," but know God "even as we are known" by him.* Then, no longer with the great labour and small results of our study here, we shall know and ever advance in knowing God in all his wondrous works. Throughout the ever on-going ages of eternity we shall see new, vast, and delightful fields of knowledge open before us, illustrating to us the infinite power, wisdom, and love of God; and all we learn shall fill us with the greater admiration, love and devotion.

(4.) There is one other lesson we may learn from the emblem now before us: it serves to teach us that our holiness, or consecration to God, must be manifested. Religion is not merely a matter between God and the individual soul of each, it is besides to be manifested to our fellow-men. Christians should be known by their fruits, and cause men by their good deeds, which they behold, to glorify God. This is taught us when we learn that God's name is to be written upon his people's foreheads, even as on the forehead of our high priest. Agreeably with this also, in baptism the Church well directs that the badge of Christians, the symbol of the cross, should be marked with the sacred water upon our foreheads,

* 1st Cor. xiii. 12.

in token that we should not be ashamed in after life “to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under his banner.” Hence, also, the Jews were directed to bind upon their foreheads memorials of their calling.* Of our religion we should never be ashamed, and it should never be concealed. Of him who is ashamed of it, Jesus declares he will be ashamed when he shall come in his glory.† We must, therefore, not only “believe with the heart,” but also “confess with the lip the Lord Jesus.” Thus openly to confess Christ, implies also the decided following of him. We must not attempt a compromise. We cannot serve God and Mammon. God demands our first affections: “My son,” he says, “give me thine heart.” Our foremost object must be to love, serve, and glorify God. “Seek ye first,” says our blessed Saviour, “the kingdom of God, and his righteousness.” The Christian must, in a marked manner, separate himself from the world and its spirit, even in as marked a manner as though he were sealed with a visible stamp upon the forehead. All these things St. Peter unites in a passage which has been just now referred to, saying, “Ye are a chosen generation, *a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.*”

* Ex. xiii. 9, 16; Deut. vi. 8., and xi. 18. † Mark viii. 38.

Let us then examine ourselves whether the stamp of Christ is upon us; whether, he being our high priest, we have the mark of his people. St. Paul says, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal: the Lord knoweth them that are his; and, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."* Have we this seal set upon us? Are we as lights shining in the dark—as cities set upon hills? If Christ's new name be written upon our hearts, it will also be written, as with a finger of light, upon our foreheads. If we have spiritual communion with Christ as our high priest, and have a good hope through faith of partaking of his glory, we shall now reflect his holiness. When Moses had dwelt for forty days with God amidst the clouds and thunders of Mount Sinai, he returned amongst his brethren with visible glory sparkling upon his brow; and even so, spiritually, it will be with the Christian. The more and the closer his communion with Jesus on the mercy-seat, the more will he manifest to men by the holiness of his life, whose follower he is,—the more shall men take knowledge of him that he has been with, learned from, and copied the character of his master. Is it our desire thus to live? are we walking as becometh our high calling, worthy of the gospel of Christ?

Painfully conscious we shall be the more we

* 1 Tim. ii. 19.

thus aim, how very short we fall, how stained we are ; but our peace is the blood of Christ, which cleanseth from all sin, and that he, all holy, bears the iniquity of our holy things, so that in him we may be accepted. From this peace let us gather courage to press forward. Let us pray and strive that Christ's holy name may shine, as it were upon our foreheads. Thus shall we wear a more noble diadem than ever loaded with care the brows of earthly monarch, while "a crown of glory which fadeth not away" is reserved for us in heaven. May we by faith, by prayer, by watchfulness, and every means which God has appointed, be enabled so to walk on earth as heirs of heaven, and finally to attain eternal happiness !

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR KING.

WE have now considered three particulars which marked this appearance of our blessed Saviour to St. John, and which, in obedience to the Divine command, the beloved disciple has "written for our learning." These three are, his robe, his girdle, and his mitre; and we have considered them as indicative of, especially, one of his threefold offices,—viz., his high priesthood. Our endeavour has been to show, that it is not without meaning of the greatest importance, that Christ in glory is represented as clad in a robe extending to his feet, and girt with a golden girdle; neither is it without cause that it is recorded that his head presented a bright and splendid appearance. These we have considered as relating to the typical vestures of the typical priesthood, and as identifying Christ as the reality they prefigured, while also we have endeavoured to discover

the spiritual import of these mystical ornaments, and some practical truths we may learn by them. In thus proceeding we have always taken other parts of God's word as our guide, and have never written without what we have considered its evident sanction.

But in the remaining particulars that the apostle records, and to which we now proceed, there is no correspondence with the garments or ornaments of the Aaronical priesthood, nor any immediate reference to Christ as our priest. The three particulars which next follow appear, rather, to signify the majesty which belongs to Christ. They are these: "His eyes were as a flame of fire; and his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters."

As there is no further allusion to the garments of priesthood, we shall no longer be able to derive help from the parts of Exodus by which we have thus far been so much assisted. Nevertheless, as it cannot but be that the latter, as well as the former portion of this account of our Lord's appearance, is recorded for our learning, we must endeavour to derive instruction from it, though thus cut off from the help which has, so far, so much guided us. Let us be fully persuaded that nothing recorded in Scripture is written there in vain: every word has meaning, and useful lessons may be learned from each particular in the blessed and precious revelation which God has

given to men. We may be sure that even those things which appear to us most insignificant or unintelligible, have important meanings; and that, if we fail to reap instruction from them, the fault is our own—our want of prayer or want of study. Convinced of this, though we have lost one light, let us, guided by others in the same revelation, endeavour to gather what we may learn of Christ from the rest of this description, and how we may apply what we thus learn to ourselves—for this is the science and the art of religion,—its very essence,—to study Christ, and apply what we learn of him to ourselves. May the Holy Spirit enlighten our understandings, that we may derive benefit from the consideration of this portion of his blessed Word !

In pursuing this inquiry we may still obtain guidance from the two other books of the Old Testament to which, along with Exodus, we have in the foregoing pages chiefly referred—namely, the books of the prophets Daniel and Zechariah. To these we may add, as an important help, supplying the place of that we here lose, the epistles addressed to the seven churches, contained in the second and third chapters of the book before us. Jesus Christ, as we have before observed, addresses an epistle through St. John to each of the seven churches in Asia, and we find that the opening of each separate epistle is distinguished by some particular note descriptive of

Christ's appearance. Now, each of these particular descriptions opening the several epistles, is taken from the passage in the first chapter which is under consideration, being borrowed either from the facts here recorded as to Christ's appearance, or from the words which he addresses to St. John. For example, in addressing the Ephesian church, Jesus designates himself as he "who holdeth the seven stars in his right hand, and walketh in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks." (chap. ii. 1, with chap. i. 13, 16.) Again, in the eighth verse of the second chapter, addressing the Smyrnian church, he calls himself "The first and the last, which was dead, and is alive." (compare chap. i. 17, 18.) In the twelfth verse of the same chapter he writes to the church of Pergamos, and styles himself he that "hath the sharp sword with two edges." (compare chap. i. 16.) Writing to the church of Thyatira, he describes himself as "the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass." (chap. ii. 18, with chap. i. 14, 15.) In the first verse of the third chapter, addressing the Sardian church, he entitles himself "He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars." (compare chap. i. 16.) In the seventh verse of the same chapter he, in writing to the church of Philadelphia, describes himself as "He that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth and no man shutteth, and

shutteth and no man openeth." (compare chap. i. 5, 18.) And lastly, in addressing the church of the Laodiceans, he writes, "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God." (chap. iii. 14, with chap. i. 5, 17; 18.) Now, it cannot be without some design and significant end that Jesus Christ thus varies his designation to each particular church, and that he takes these various titles from this passage in the first chapter. Evidently it is with purpose of importance that *here* Christ's appearance and words are recorded, and *there*, to each particular church, some portion of this record is taken by our Saviour as his peculiar title in reference to each church. Hence we may conclude, that, by examining the manner in, and the object for which Jesus Christ especially addresses each of those churches, we may have great light afforded us as to the meaning of those titles which he employs, and, consequently, as to the meaning of the passage in the first chapter, whence we have seen that they are taken. For the future, therefore, we shall refer to these epistles as illustrating to us the portion of the description of our Saviour's appearance still to be considered, as well as the words which he here speaks to his disciple.

The three particulars which follow, descriptive of the eyes, the feet, and the voice of the Son of man, we have already said, appear to refer to his majesty,

or his office of king. These emblems serve in general to denote, firstly, his superintendence, knowledge, and providence; secondly, his swiftness and power in executing right judgment; and thirdly, the omnipotence of his command—reaching throughout the universe, and obeyed by all creation. Before we enter upon the particular consideration of these three figures, and endeavour to show that their reference is chiefly to Christ's kingly office, we shall make two observations—the first relative to the unavoidable blending of the three offices of Christ, the second as to the time of his inauguration to this particular office.

1. We have said, that the three symbols here used as to the eyes, the feet, and the voice of Christ, refer *chiefly* to his kingly office, and we have used the word chiefly because there may also be found in them reference to his priestly and prophetical offices; even as in the preceding emblems, which denote especially his priesthood, his offices as king and prophet have been shadowed forth. We have observed before, that, though we may profitably, and therefore ought to consider each office of Christ distinctly by itself, yet we cannot separate them, for they form a triple unity, even as the trinity of the Godhead. Christ's unity is perfected in the triplicity of his offices, as the unity of the Godhead is in the triplicity of the persons. Hence there is hardly any passage or type

expressive of any of Christ's offices which does not more or less involve them all, though one may be made, perhaps, in any particular instance, to have the more prominence.

In the earliest ages of the world the union of these three offices may be plainly observed. Previous to the appointment of a certain tribe and family to fulfil the priesthood, the father, or patriarch of the family, was the priest, as he would also naturally be the ruler or king, as well as the instructor or prophet of his family. Of this union of offices in the ante-Israelitish church, we have examples in Noah, Melchisedec, and more especially in Abraham. We see Noah acting as the priest of his family when he built an altar and offered sacrifice. He appears before us as a king as well as a prophet when he arranges the future destinies of his posterity; and St. Peter shows him acting more especially as a prophet, when he styles him "a preacher of righteousness."* Melchisedec, whom we know to have been so remarkable a type of Christ, was "king of Salem" and "priest of the most high God," and we cannot doubt but that he taught his fellow-men the knowledge of the true God, thus being a prophet as well as king and priest. We can trace "the friend of God" very distinctly fulfilling these threefold offices in and for his household. Acting as priest, he offered sacrifice;

* See Gen. viii. 20, 21, and ix. 25—27; and 2 Pet. ii. 5.

acting as king, he governed his household, and led them to battle ; and acting as prophet, he instructed them in the true faith.*

But when, in after ages, God made choice of one particular tribe and family among Abraham's posterity, to fill the sacred office of the priesthood, we find these priests also combined in themselves the essentials of these three offices. These legal priests were admittedly typical of Christ : they were eminently priests, but with their priesthood was involved something of these other two offices. This priesthood was ordained instead of the patriarchal form, in which the eldest of the family became its prophet, priest, and king. That the priests of Israel had something of kinghood in their priesthood is evident from their position, duties, and history. There was at first no actual king appointed of God for Israel, because he himself was their king ; but under him the priests exercised many regal functions. There were frequently prophets among the Israelites, distinct from the priests ; but, ordinarily, the priests were in fact the prophets, or teachers of the people. Of the exercise of regal authority by the priesthood there are very many examples : amongst the rest, to them for the most part pertained the executive power, the passing of judgment, or the acquittal of the accused. Of this, an example may be found in the fifth of

* For example, see Gen. xxii. 18, xiv. 14, and xviii. 19.

Numbers and the thirtieth verse; and in the seventeenth chapter of Deuteronomy, in the eighth and four following verses, where disobedience to the judicial sentence of the priests and Levites is directed to be punished most severely. Of the regal priests exercising the prophetical or instructive office, we have also examples. God appointed Aaron to be prophet to Moses in his mission to Pharaoh and Israel: that is, that he should communicate and explain to them the message of Moses.* In the blessing upon Levi, found in the thirty-third chapter of Deuteronomy, is included that "they shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy laws." And in the last prophet of the Old Testament, that this office pertained to the priesthood is declared, when we read, "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts." †

But if, from what was typical of the offices of Christ, we now turn to the prophecies in which his coming and official character are predicted, we shall find the same union of these three offices. A few examples will serve to confirm this observation. The twenty-second Psalm predicts the sacrifice, which involves the priesthood of Christ, and also his prophetical and kingly dignity. His prophetical office is exhibited from the twenty-second to the

* Exod. vii. 1.

† Mal. ii. 7.

twenty-seventh verse, in which Jesus announces that he will "declare" the name of God, and the success that shall attend upon his teaching. His kingly office is displayed in the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth verses, when it is announced "the kingdom is the Lord's," and that "he is the governor among the nations."* Turning to the ninth chapter of Isaiah, we find there another prophecy declaring Christ as possessed of this triple dignity. "The government shall be," we there read, "upon his shoulders," and his "government shall have no end;" He shall sit "upon the throne of David, and order it, and establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth, even for ever." Here is evidently Christ, the king. But he is also entitled the "Prince of Peace," and his government shall be called one of "peace;" here evidently is Christ, the priest, for he sits as "a priest upon his throne," the "counsel of peace" being formed and promulgated by Him as both king and priest.† But further: Christ is also here declared to be the "wonderful" and "the counsellor," by which titles he is marked to be the revealer of God's will, the instructor of his people. Here, therefore, is also Christ, the prophet.

Let us turn to one other remarkable prophecy of the Messiah, and we shall find also in it these three

* See also the one hundred and tenth Psalm.

† Compare Zech. vi. 13.

offices combined : the passage referred to is contained in the ninth chapter of the prophet Daniel, in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth verscs. Our design at present does not lead us to make any other observation on this important prediction, except that we find in it the Messiah foretold as our prophet, priest, and king. Thus in the end of the twenty-fourth verse it is said that, a certain period should suffice "to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy :" here in the margin "prophet" is read for "prophecy," and this is the better reading. Here, then, the prediction of Messiah as prophet, and as the anointed Most Holy, that is, Messiah as priest of his church, is evident. In the next verse his coming again is foretold, and he is then spoken of as "the Messiah the Prince." So that here again Christ is foretold as prophet, priest, and king.

Now, as of old, types and prophecies predicted Christ as combining these three offices, even so we find him set forth in the New Testament as uniting these dignities in his person, and, among other passages, here, when he manifests himself to St. John, he appears with emblems which mark him as invested with this triplicity,—priest, king, prophet. We have considered the three emblems which mark him to be the first, and we are now to consider those three which we take as significant of the second ; but we shall, as we may expect, find them also implying

in degree his other offices, even as we have seen the three marks of his priesthood involve, in measure, the other two; and even, as in type and prophecy of old, the whole three are found united.

• 2. But before we proceed, we proposed, secondly, to consider *the time of Christ's entrance upon this his office of King*.—It is certain that even from everlasting Jesus Christ is at once prophet, and priest, and king of his church in a certain sense; but it is equally evident that there is a “fulness of time” appointed of the Father, when he enters more strictly and immediately into each of these offices. From the beginning he hath been, is now, and ever shall be all three to his people; but nevertheless, there are marked epocha when each especially commences, as well as when all three shall be taken up into one. This eternity of purpose, whereby the thing not yet come to pass is considered and acted upon as though it were accomplished, and yet its subsequent fulfilment in the “fulness of time,” is illustrated in the sacrifice of Christ’s death. Jesus is styled in the thirteenth chapter of this Revelation, “The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” (verse 8.) This he was in a certain sense and in effect; but the event itself was accomplished when he exclaimed, “It is finished!” He, as the lamb without blemish, was “verily foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in

these last times for us.”* Even so Christ hath ever been the office-bearer for his church, but in “due time” he has especially commenced each of his triple dignities. From the first he was the prophet of his people, for he is the eternal Word by whom from the beginning God has communicated his will to men. It was the spirit of Christ which spake by the prophets, and preached through Noah.† But more especially, “in these last times God hath spoken unto us by his Son,” who then formally entered upon his office as prophet of his church, when, after his baptism, the descent and abiding with him of the Spirit, the voice of the Father calling him to his offices, and passing through the ordeal of temptation in order to suit him, among other things, to teach the tempted, he entered into the synagogue at Nazareth, and, opening the book of the prophet Isaiah at the sixty-first chapter, read that passage which describes the Saviour as the “Preacher,” or prophet of mankind, and announced to the astonished assembly that that day, that scripture was fulfilled in him.‡ During the remainder of the time he continued on earth he was especially engaged in this office, giving light to men. He *then* was our prophet in a particular manner. Now indeed he still teaches us, but more as he did before his incarnation, through the

* 1 Pet. i. 19, 20.

† Ib. 11, and iii. 18—20.

‡ Luke iv. 16—21.

instrumentality of inspired persons and stated teachers, the difference being that *then* inspired persons were present and spoke; *now* we have their writings, and a more full and clear revelation of God's will than previous to the time when Christ, as our prophet on earth, "brought life and immortality to light." This office, therefore, Christ has entered upon, and passed through, in its strictest sense; still, however, exercising it in a certain sense, and to exercise it throughout eternity.

As Christ *has* been the prophet of his church, so he *now is* her "great high priest." And from the beginning he held this office, because it was only on account of the sacrifice he had to offer, and the intercession he made, that man was saved from immediate death in consequence of sin. As He was "the lamb slain from the foundation of the earth," so also he was the priest to offer up this blessed sacrifice. But as at a certain moment the sacrifice was actually slain, so also at a certain time Christ actually entered upon the office of priest to offer up this sacrifice. This time we have seen to have been when he rose again from the dead, being then saluted as priest by God the Father. This office he now fulfils "at the right hand of the majesty on high," ever pleading his sacrifice, and making intercession to God for us.

As with his prophetical and priestly, so also with

respect to his regal office. From the beginning he was king of his people; but there is a particular epoch for his commencing especially this his last and highest dignity. We have seen that he has entered upon and passed through his office as prophet, that he is now exercising his office as priest; and it appears that he is yet to enter, in the highest sense, upon his office as king. As before he commenced actually the two former, he was yet virtually possessed of them in the Divine purpose; so he is virtually king now, but not yet in the full force and manifested power in which he shall “in due time” enter upon this third office, which will include and perfect the others.

That this is to take place hereafter, will be evident from the following considerations. The throne promised to Christ as king is a throne of manhood, not of Godhead; for the latter he has originally, but the former he has acquired by his humiliation. Thus we find that the throne that is to be his, is called “the throne of his father David.”* Now, such a throne Christ has never yet possessed, nor is there any rational mode of explaining these words in a spiritual (so called) meaning. Here we may usefully recollect the canon of the learned Hooker. “I hold it,” he says, “for a most infallible rule in expositions of sacred scripture, that where a literal construction

* Isa. ix. 7; and Luke i. 32, 33.

will stand, the furthest from the letter is commonly the worst. There is nothing more dangerous than this licentious and deluding art, which changeth the meaning, as alchymy doth, or would do, the substance of metals, making of anything what it listeth, and bringeth in the end all truth to nothing." So also Luther observes: "No metaphor, no trope in Scripture, save where the figureless interpretation involves a palpable contradiction." No contradiction is involved in maintaining that Christ is to inherit David's throne, even as we say of any earthly monarch that he inherits the throne of his fore-fathers; but the literal interpretation will evidently stand.

In the very terms by which Christ is exalted to his present position it is implied that he has not yet entered fully on his royalty, for he is thus addressed: "The LORD said unto my lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool."* "But now we see not yet all things put under him; but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour."† We see Jesus exalted indeed, but not yet put in possession of manifest dominion over all men and things. Hence, referring to these very words of the hundred and tenth Psalm, St. Paul observes, that Christ, having "offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down at the right hand of God;

* Psa. cx. 1.

† Heb. ii. 8, 9, and Acts ii. 30.

from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."* Thus Christ's present exaltation is one including expectation, to terminate in realization when his enemies are made his footstool. He has not yet received the throne of his father David, but is seated upon the throne of God; in other words, he has not yet obtained the throne which, as the man Jesus Christ, is to be his, but as God he reigns now with God, and as our mediator. And this distinction our Lord himself very clearly makes in his promise to the faithful, as found in the twenty-first verse of the third chapter of the Revelation, when he says, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." Here is a manifest distinction between Christ's throne, which he promises to share with his people, and the Father's throne, which Christ now occupies with the Father. At present, Christ is set down with the Father according to that salutation, "Jehovah said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand." The throne that he is to share with his people he has not yet received, but shall when his foes are "made his footstool," for then he will give to the former "power over the nations."†

It is very evident, therefore, that Christ has not yet entered fully on his regal office. If, then, we look out for the time when he shall be inaugurated into

* Heb. x. 12, 13.

† Rev. ii. 26, 27.

this dignity, we shall find that it will be at his second advent—the end of this dispensation. If we refer to the nineteenth chapter of this book, we there find Christ represented as coming forth as priest and prophet, and by his power and judgment vindicating to himself the title of “**KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.**” This takes place at the period of judgment, that is, the time of Christ’s second coming; and then “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.” Christ participating in this his kingdom with his people, according to his promise, they shall possess the honour for which they give thanks to the Lamb, saying, thou “hast made us unto our God, kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth,” even where Christ’s throne shall be established. To this also agrees the vision of Daniel, for it is where the other kingdoms stood that “the stone cut out of the mountain without hands” becomes the great enduring kingdom; for God gives to Christ “dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve him;” and then, too, “the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”* These things have not come to pass, but they shall when Christ returns to earth, for the apostle teaches us that “his appearance and

* See Daniel, chapters ii. and vii.

his kingdom" are simultaneous events.* Hence, therefore, these truths appear evident: Christ is to possess the throne of David, but he has not yet possessed it; his enemies are all to be placed beneath his footstool, this is not yet accomplished; when he receives this power and this throne he promises to his people part in them, which has not yet come to pass: but this throne and this power he shall receive at his second coming, and these also his people shall then share with him. In other words, he shall then enter fully upon his office as king, and his people shall reign with him.

But in the meantime, Christ is exalted to the right hand of God, and although he has not yet received his throne as the MAN, yet "all power is given to him in heaven and earth," which power he exercises for his people. As before he entered formally upon his prophetic and priestly dignities he yet acted as the prophet and priest of his church, so, although not yet actually become our king as the Son of man, he yet exercises regal power over and for his church. Bearing these things in mind, that now he exercises, as is his right, on the Father's throne, regal power over man, and that at his second coming he shall more especially, actually, manifestly, and confessedly reign as king of men, let us now proceed to notice the three particulars which we take as here signifying this his regal dignity.

* 2 Tim. iv. 1.

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR KING. HIS GRACIOUS PROVIDENCE.

"And his eyes were as a flame of fire."—Part of verse 14.

THIS is the first particular which we consider as emblematical of Christ's kinghood, and it seems to express the providence, using the word in its most extensive meaning, which, as king, Christ exercises over and for his church. We have already seen how remarkably the vision of Daniel and John correspond, and as in other things, so in this particular there is an agreement, for he who gave to Daniel his revelation is described as having "eyes that were as lamps of fire."* Thus it appears that the same being was always the revealer of God's mind and purposes to men; that he was and is and ever shall be, the great and only channel of intercourse between the Creator and his fallen creatures.

A particular thus specified must have been recorded by these inspired writers, because it is calculated to teach us some important truth relative to

* Dan. x. 6.

this being. Let us endeavour to discover what we may learn, therefore, by the statement that Christ's "eyes were as a flame of fire."

We have said that this appears to denote his providence, using that word in a large sense, so as to imply his government in general, providing and arranging for future emergencies, and altogether extending a guardian care and watch over his church, and involving consequently the final and future defeat of the enemies of the church. In short, we use the word providence here in much the same sense in which we find it employed by Tertullus, in his oration against Paul, addressed to Felix, when he says, "By thee we enjoy great quietness, and very worthy deeds are done unto this nation by thy providence.* The emblem before us is significant of the adaptation and power of our king, Christ, to exercise such providential government, his gracious and watchful care towards and in his church, whereby he keeps her every moment, so that none can hurt her. Such a power also implies that he is capable of judging who are really, and who are only nominally his people ; so that he can distinguish enemies within the camp, as well as watch against open foes. All this is evidently the duty of a king, or one on whose shoulder is the government.

In order that it may appear that these things are

* Acts xxiv. 2.

indicated of Christ by the words under consideration, we shall, in the first place, refer to a passage which has already done us service in arriving at the signification of the mysteries of the particulars here mentioned as to Christ's appearance. We have, indeed, as we have observed, lost the guidance we derived from the book of Exodus, but we have still a light to help us in the prophecy of Zechariah. In the third chapter of that book we have seen Joshua the high-priest, clothed with a change of raiment, even a robe down to his foot, and a fair mitre placed upon his head ; and we have read there that he and his fellows were "men for a sign," or typical persons, even typical of "the BRANCH," Jesus Christ. (verses 3—8.) We find it added, in the ninth verse, "For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua ; upon (that) one stone shall be seven eyes." Going on to the next chapter, we find in the fourth verse, the prophet inquiring of the angel that talked with him the meaning of the things he had seen, saying, "What are these, my lord ?" The angel, in reply, proceeds to explain the vision, and, in the end of the tenth verse, tells Zechariah that "those seven, they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth." "Those seven" may refer to the seven lamps seen by the prophet burning in the golden candlestick, which he mentions in the second verse of this chapter, but these lamps only burn by

virtue of the “golden oil,” which is evidently a figure of the Holy Spirit; but it is manifest that “those seven” which are the “eyes of the Lord,” refer primarily to “the seven eyes upon the one stone,” which are also figures of the Holy Spirit. It is evident that this stone is a figure of Christ: hence it is called emphatically that “one stone;” and a little afterwards we find it spoken of as “the headstone.” (ch. iv. 7.) Now, this very title is given to Christ by the Psalmist in the twenty-second verse of the hundred-and-eighteenth psalm, which we find our Lord quoting as referring to himself, and at the same time comparing himself to a stone, in his reasoning with the Jews, as recorded in the twenty-first chapter of St. Matthew, where, having quoted from this psalm, he afterwards says, “Whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” (verses 42—44.)

Not to refer to other passages in which this title of stone, or rock, is given to Christ, it will be evident from what has been quoted, that this “one stone” was a figure of Christ, the rock. But, moreover, we read that on this “one stone” were seven eyes, explained to be the “seven eyes of Jehovah, which run to and fro through the whole earth,” and in connection with these, there is also mention of seven lamps. Now let us turn to the fourth chapter of the Revelation, and there, in the fifth verse, we read that

"there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God :" and again, in the next chapter and the sixth verse, we read that, "in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, *which are the seven Spirits of God sent forth into all the earth.*" Here the correspondence is manifest. Here is the same Christ in one place as a stone, in another as a lamb, with seven eyes, called in one place the eyes of God which run to and fro through the earth, and in the other the seven Spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth. Hence, these seven eyes of Christ represent "the seven Spirits of God ;" but these "seven Spirits of God" are the same with "the seven Spirits which are before the throne," spoken of in the fourth verse of the first chapter of the Revelation, and these we have already seen to be the emblem of the third person in the adorable Trinity, the Holy Spirit. Hence, therefore, Christ is, by this figure of seven eyes, represented to us as possessed of the fulness of the Spirit, and these eyes are likewise compared to "lamps of fire ;" so that, when in the passage under consideration, Christ is said to have had eyes as "a flame of fire," it is plainly signified that in him the Holy Spirit dwells in all fulness. Here is, then, throughout Scripture, in this respect, a beautiful unity to be observed. In one place as "the Son of man," in another

place as "a stone," and in another passage as "a lamb," Christ is represented as having in himself "the fulness of the Godhead," as he to whom God "giveth not the Spirit by measure," but upon whom, as the man Christ Jesus, the Spirit descended and for ever abides.

Thus understanding the expression that "his eyes were as a flame of fire," we may learn from it that Christ, in the midst of his church, is now in his heavenly glory, possessed of the fulness of the Holy Spirit, and thereby, as our king, carries forward the government, preservation, and instruction of his church; or, as we may express it, exercises over it a gracious providence. We cannot better learn how, by the Spirit, Jesus Christ is adapted to this portion of his offices as man, nor better express what its duties are, than by quoting the words of the prophet Isaiah, who thus speaks of Christ's anointing with the Spirit, and his consequent authority: "There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; and the Spirit of the **LORD** shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the **LORD**; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the **LORD**: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: but with righteousness shall he judge the

poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked (one) : and righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins.”* Here the sevenfold gifts of the Spirit are enumerated as in Christ, prominence especially being given to his regal power in judging and in destroying the wicked one : yet, also, his royal teaching and priesthood are expressed ; for if, as a priest and prophet, he reigns, so, also, as king he teaches and redeems us.

With the regal power as resulting from this unction by the Spirit, we have now more particularly to do. This power is signified by the very emblem of eyes, for it expresses his possession of the completeness of knowledge necessary to perfect government. It is by our eyes we take knowledge of events, and watch over occurrences ; and hence it is said that a man is an overseer, (the title in the original which is intended by our term bishop,) or takes the oversight of anything, when he attends to it and takes the responsibility of it upon himself. These eyes of Christ are said “to run to and fro through the earth”—to be “the spirit of God sent forth into all the earth.” Hence is plainly taught us Christ’s government of all things in earth, and his care for his church, as well

* Isa. xi. 1—5.

as his accurate knowledge of the affairs of his people. Thus St. Peter styles him "the bishop," that is, literally, "the overseer of our souls;";* and he quotes David, saying, "The eyes of the LORD are over the righteous:"† and the prophet who rebuked king Asa told him that "the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him."‡

Jesus Christ, as our great ruler now in his glory, carries on this gracious providence over us by his Spirit, condescending to behold the things of earth. However humble may be the condition of the Christian, however the noisy and vain world may sweep by him without a thought, as unworthy of attention, he knows that the high and holy Jesus, seated at the right hand of heavenly majesty, forgets him not, but beholds him continually with an anxious eye of wise and tender love. With him is no respect of persons, for "he is great and despiseth not any;" nor are any so highly exalted as to appear on that account more important in his sight. The Christian's trials may be great, and yet unknown to his fellow-men, or if known disregarded; but his comfort is, that there is an almighty eye which sees and sympathises with his trials, and who will defend under, and deliver out of them. He knows Jesus as his ruler, his guide, and

* 1 Pet. ii. 25.

† Ib. iii. 12.

‡ 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

king, and sees his hand and hears his voice in every thing, and is persuaded that he does "all things well," knowing that

"O'er him he watches in his boundless reign,"

that he is

"As much his care, as if beside
Nor man nor angel lived in heaven or earth."

And if from this kingly providence which now Christ exercises, each individual believer may take such comfort, so also may the whole church, which they together constitute. At the same time, let us not forget that, while Christ is thus exercising through the Spirit his providential government now, there shall be a time when he shall be more fully manifested as our king, and, as such, shall more openly exercise his government on earth, reigning over and for his people, judging and destroying his enemies, and confessed to be earthly universal Lord and King.

But not only are we to learn that Christ as king in glory watches over and governs us in temporal matters, and sustains us in our trials—he also extends to us the providence of his grace, so that, as chance cannot befall us, neither can temptations, if we look to him for his Spirit's help, entirely overthrow us. The passage we have quoted from Isaiah shows us Christ possessed of the Spirit's fulness, in order not only to govern by his providence, but also to save,

and bless, and teach his people. Another passage in the same prophet beautifully sets before us Christ's unction with the Spirit, in order to the dispensation of his gracious designs. We refer to that passage which our blessed Lord announced in the synagogue of Nazareth to be then fulfilled in him, and which is found in the opening of the sixty-first chapter of Isaiah. It is there written, "The Spirit of the **LORD GOD** is upon me; because the **LORD** hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the **LORD**, and the day of vengeance of our **God**; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the **LORD**, that he might be glorified." (verses 1—3.) Thus filled with the fulness of the Holy Spirit, this gracious Saviour reigns in glory and is amidst his church, to save, to teach, to comfort, to uphold, as well as to govern. He is among us "a very present help in time of trouble," with power and will to defend. For all, therefore, that we want of care or grace from him, for the blessings of his gracious providence, let us

come to his footstool, and we shall find his powerful goodness extended to us.

But while the emblem under our consideration thus represents the fulness of the Spirit dwelling in Jesus, let us remember, also, that he is our example, as well our great king, priest and prophet. We have already observed that we must imitate him as our priest, and so must we also in this particular be like our king. The spirit that dwells in fulness in him, must in some degree also abide in us. He has promised to give us this blessing, if we sincerely ask for it. To have the Spirit of God is the mark of being sons of God and "joint heirs with Christ." "Because ye are sons," says the apostle, "God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father."* "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."† Thus the indwelling of the Spirit here, is the mark of heirship hereafter with Christ to kingly dignity. On the other hand, there can be no hope of this glorious inheritance hereafter without the present participation of the Spirit; for we are taught that, "if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his."‡ Here is therefore a serious point for self-examination: are we partakers of this Spirit? Very solemn is the exhortation of the apostle in the last chapter of his second epistle to the Corinthians, when he says,

* Gal. iv. 6.

† Rom. viii. 15—17.

‡ Ib. 9.

"Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know, ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." (verse 5.) Let it be our earnest prayer that "Christ Jesus may dwell in our hearts by faith," through his Holy Spirit, and that we may be led continually by that Spirit, submitting ourselves wholly to the government of Christ as our king. Let us remember that, if we rest on his work as our priest to save us, we must also diligently endeavour to surrender ourselves to his laws as our king, to rule in and over us. None who are not the subjects of his kingly power can possess a saving interest in his priestly work. Thus to serve Christ our king will require on our parts the greatest diligence and prayer, for the gross attractions of the world are ever drawing down the heavenly aspirations of our spirits.

From the emblem before us we may further learn the regal power of the Son of man in judging of men; that is, his power, not of executing judgment, but of discerning truly the state of men, so as to execute judgment justly. This power is represented as a result of his possession of the Holy Spirit, in the passage from the eleventh of Isaiah which has been before quoted, where, that Christ as the judge of all the earth shall do right in his judgment, and cannot be deceived, is expressed, when it is said, "he

shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears; but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth . . . and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked" (one.) We have already observed that, in the addresses to the seven churches, which are to be found in the second and third chapters of the Revelation, our blessed Lord takes as his title to each, some of the particulars relative to his appearance, or his words, which are recorded in the first chapter. We have also observed that these titles are selected as suitable to the particular circumstances of each church, and that, therefore, from examining the manner and object of any of these epistles, we shall be guided to the meaning especially intended by the title employed in the address to which it is prefixed. The emblem under present consideration is used as descriptive of Christ in the epistle to the angel of the church of Thyatira, to whom he addresses himself thus: "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire." (chap. ii. 18.)

Now, if we look over the epistle thus headed, we shall find that in it our Saviour speaks of his searching power—his power of judging truly of men, and consequently of exercising over them righteous government. Thus we read in the twenty-third verse: "I am he which searcheth the reins and

hearts; and I will give unto every one of you according to your works." Here his power in judging truly of men, is immediately connected with his executing true judgment upon them. This same figure is also employed in a similar connection in the nineteenth chapter of this book, where Christ is represented as going forth to execute judgment upon the world; but that he shall do so in righteousness is evidenced when it is said, "His eyes were as a flame of fire." (verse 12.) Were his eyes not thus discerning, he would not be qualified to pronounce just sentences on men; but forasmuch as "all hearts are open to him, all desires known, and from him no secrets can be hid," he is the only MAN qualified to carry righteous judgment into effect. This part of the regal power of Christ, his unerring judgment, is indicated, therefore, when it is said, "his eyes were as a flame of fire;" they are piercing and penetrating, "and nothing can be hidden from the light thereof."

Such power of discrimination as is hereby signified, is frequently spoken of as a Divine attribute in Scripture. Thus Solomon says, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good."^{*} And this power Christ especially exercises in his church, which is no less the peculiar theatre of his judgments than it is of his mercies; and indeed of

the former, because of the latter. The apostle teaches us this discerning power of Christ in a very solemn and impressive manner in his epistle to the Hebrews, saying, "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a dis- cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do."* Jesus Christ, with all-piercing eyes as of fire, is ever present amidst his church, judging and discerning the real character of each, in order, in the end, to "render unto every man according to his work." That he is now thus ruling and judging in the midst of us, as preparatory to his final sentence of judgment upon each, is a truth most solemn and practical. He knows what we in truth are, and no outside garb of religion can pass with him, but all is vain unless our hearts be his. He accurately discerns and distinguishes between the real servants of God, however weak their faith or humble their position, and those who, while they may have a name to live, are yet dead in sins.

This truth may help and warn even the most advanced Christian to advance still further. Christ is

* Heb. iv. 12, 13.

amongst us, and his all-seeing eye is ever upon us. Has this solemn truth of Christ's presence and inspection of our hearts and lives had its due influence upon us? Have we been endeavouring to live as thus perpetually seen by him? Are we studying to act as under the immediate presence and observation of our great king, Jesus Christ; to whom we shall have to render our account, and from whom we shall receive our final sentence? It should be our anxious endeavour to have a deep and influential conviction of Christ's presence and inspection impressed continually upon our minds. We should pray that we may carry it with us, and be guided by it in every place. At home, let it influence and regulate our domestic and private conduct; in public, let it be with us, to teach us to fulfil our duties towards our fellow-men, by honourable, upright, kind, considerate, and in one word, by Christian conduct. In the busy and crowded, as well as in the quiet and solitary scenes of life, let this truth shine before us as a star to beacon us along "the straight and narrow path" which ends in eternal life.

Again : to the careless and the openly wicked there is no truth, which, if it might gain attention, is more awakening and solemn than this, that the eye of Christ is now, and shall be for ever upon them. It is the instinctive desire of fallen man to flee and hide himself from the eye of God. Thus Adam, losing his

wisdom when he lost his innocence, vainly endeavoured to hide himself beneath the trees from his Maker. His posterity, equally guilty, with equal folly daily endeavour also to hide themselves from their God: hence men banish thought, and plunge into riot and dissipation, in order to forget God, imagining that then he has forgotten them. But “his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.” “There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves.”* It is not possible that for even one instant of his life a man can conceal himself from God’s holy and searching eye. Does he hurry into the crowd? God is there. Does he retire into secret, or wrap himself in the darkness of the night? God is still present; and to him “the darkness and the light are both alike, and the night shineth as the day.”† No man can ever be alone. God is always everywhere present; and there is not a thought we have cherished, a word we have uttered, or an action we have performed, of which he has not been the witness, which is not recorded in his book of remembrance, and that is not now as fresh before him as at the first moment of its commission. They recur to us, if they at all recur, softened by distance; but not so before God, for time lessens not the guilt of sin with him.

* Job xxxiv. 21, 22.

† Read in connexion the whole of Psalm cxxxix.

With these solemn truths in our minds let us reflect on the time past of our lives ; let us unlock the doors of memory, and recall things long gone by, as well as recent. So doing, what a view rises before us ! Polluted thoughts, unholy language, and unhallowed deeds without number, crowd into our field of view, and utter condemnation upon us in fearful accents. Now all these God has seen and recorded—all these, and far more which we have forgotten, and when “the judgment is set and the books are opened,” all shall rise as swift witnesses against us, and condemn us to endless night and woe, unless before that hour we have found and had recourse to that which alone can blot out our transgressions, and wash away our offences.

Consider, then, what an awful prospect is before those who continue in sin. “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.” Now, sinners cannot hide themselves from the eye of Jesus, nor practise deception towards him, neither can they escape at the solemn day of final account. Vainly shall they then endeavour to hide “themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains ; and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come ; and who shall be able to stand ?” * And as the sinner cannot here conceal himself from

* Rev. vi. 15—17.

his eye, or hereafter fly his judgment, so can he not throughout eternity escape his power. That eye which now beams with mercy, shall for ever sensibly be upon the ungodly as a flame of fiery judgment, for if the sinner makes his bed in hell,* even there he cannot flee his Maker's presence, for even there God is to execute punishment on the guilty.

And all are guilty—how, then, shall we escape, and how find peace? Blessed be God, a remedy is provided, a refuge is opened for us. There is from a bleeding Saviour “a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness,” in which, though our “sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool”—for “the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.” To him, therefore, let us flee as our only refuge; and being washed, sanctified, and justified “in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,”† we shall stand now regarded with favour beneath the eye of our kingly priest amidst his church, and be presented hereafter “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.”‡

* Psa. cxxxix. 8.

† 1 Cor. vi. 11.

‡ Jude 24.

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR KING. HIS POWER IN JUDGMENT.

"And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace."
Verse 15.

IN considering the words last under our notice we have observed that, having had Christ in the first three particulars recorded here of his appearance, marked to be our great high priest, in the next three he is distinguished as our king. We have also observed that, by the first of these latter three particulars, which is the statement that, "his eyes were as a flame of fire," there is especially, though not exclusively, pointed out his kingly power in his providential government of the church, by which, among other things, he judges accurately and truly of the actual state of each church and person. This is a necessary qualification to the right exercise of that part of Christ's kingly prerogative which the words now to be considered especially, though not exclusively, indicate. When it is said that, "his feet were like

unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," we take these words to signify, as we shall endeavour to show they do, his *power in executing judgment*; but to do this, as Christ will do it, with perfect justice, he must be endowed with the power implied when it is said, "his eyes were as a flame of fire."

In the description of the Son of man when he appeared to the prophet Daniel, and to which we have so often before referred, we find that in this particular, as in others, his appearance corresponded with that of our blessed Saviour to St. John in the island of Patmos. In the tenth chapter of Daniel, and in the sixth verse, it is said of the being who appeared, that "his arms and his feet were like in colour to polished brass." Here, again, we draw the conclusion, that this particular must have some important signification, or why should it have been so exactly stated and repeated? and further, that it is evidently the same glorious being who revealed the purposes of God to the prophets under the Old, and to the apostles under the New Testament dispensations. All drew their light from the same eternal fountain, the Sun of Righteousness.

We have already observed that our blessed Lord opens his epistle to each of the seven churches, by taking some one or more of the particulars mentioned of his appearance in this first chapter, as his peculiar title or aspect to that church; and that, therefore,

we may arrive at the meaning of any of these particulars by examining the nature and object of the address to which it is prefixed. We have seen that, in addressing "the angel of the church in Thyatira," Jesus Christ has taken as his peculiar aspect to that church, that his "eyes were like unto a flame of fire;" and to it also he manifested himself as possessed of the power intended by the words before us. Thus he opens his epistle to that church: "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass."* Now looking into the epistle itself, we find that the power of Christ not only in judging correctly of the real characters of men, but in executing judgment accordingly upon them, are the great subjects impressed upon that church. With this latter power it is we have now to do, having already considered the former. The general tenor of this epistle indicates evidently Christ's power to execute judgment and vengeance upon his adversaries. This is implied when he styles himself in opening it, "the Son of God," for this is his name of power; and more plainly still, in the contents of the epistle. Such power is implied when it is said that, if those who committed sin repented not, he would cast them "into great tribulation," and "kill them with death." (verses 22, 23.) And again, this

* Chap. ii. 18.

power is not only claimed by Christ, but he promises to make his people partakers of it, saying : “ He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations : and he shall rule them with a rod of iron ; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers : even as I received of my Father.” (verses 26, 27.) Hence it would appear that our Lord employs this emblem as to his feet, in addressing this church, as significant of his power in executing judgment and vengeance, and therefore that such is the meaning of this emblem.

But this will appear the more manifest when, referring to other parts of Scripture, we find that by his feet, that is, as it were, by trampling upon them, Christ is represented as executing judgment upon his enemies ; thereby fulfilling the primal promise, that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, and insuring to us the fulfilment of the hope St. Paul sets before us when he says, “ the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”* We shall perceive the application of this figure to the destruction of enemies if we refer to the conduct of Joshua relative to the five kings of Canaan taken in the cave at Makkedah. When they were brought into his presence he called upon “ the captains of the men of war which went with him,” saying : “ Come near, put your feet upon the necks of these kings ; ”†

* Rom. xvi. 20.

† Josh. x. 24, 25.

and this they did as a token of their triumph, and the final utter destruction of their foes. Thus also David, a type of Christ, and speaking in the spirit of prophecy of Christ's triumphs, says, "Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies, that I might destroy them that hate me. . . . Then did I beat them as small as the dust of the earth; I did stamp them as the mire of the street."* And so Solomon, speaking of the typical triumphs of his father, says, that the Lord put all his enemies "under the soles of his feet."† Of "his son according to the flesh," even Jesus Christ, and his victories, David thus prophesies in the ninety-first Psalm: "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet." (verse 13.) And so again in the hundred and tenth Psalm: "Sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (verse 1.) Many other passages might be referred to in the Old Testament where judgment, or vengeance, is thus figuratively expressed, but we shall only refer to one. and that is the opening of the sixty-third chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, which is as follows, using Lowth's translation :

Chorus.—Who is this, that cometh from Edom?

With garments deeply dyed from Botsra?

• This, that is magnificent in his apparel;

Marching on in the greatness of his strength?

* 2 Sam. xxii. 41—43.

† 1 Kings v. 3.

MESSIAH.—I, who publish righteousness, and am mighty to save.

CHORUS.—Wherefore is thine apparel red?

And thy garments, as of one who treadeth the wine-vat?

MESSIAH.—I have trodden the vat alone;

And of the peoples there was not a man with me.

And I trod them in mine anger;

And I trampled them in mine indignation:

And their life-blood was sprinkled upon my garments;

And I have stained all mine apparel.

For the day of vengeance was in my heart;

And the year of my redeemed was come.

And I looked, and there was no one to help;

And I was astonished, that there was no one to uphold:

Therefore mine own arm wrought salvation for me,

And mine indignation itself sustained me.

And I trod down the peoples in mine anger;

And I crushed them in mine indignation;

And I spilled their life-blood on the ground.

Now, in connection with this, as explaining it, and teaching us when and by whom this scene of judgment shall be accomplished, let us read the latter part of the fourteenth chapter of the Revelation. It is there said that, one angel cried to another, saying, "Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, for her grapes are fully ripe. And the angel thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered the vine of the earth, and cast it

into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. And the wine-press was trodden without the city, and blood came out of the wine-press." And again, in the nineteenth chapter and the fifteenth verse, it is said, "he," that is Christ, "shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

From all these passages it will appear evident that the emblem as to Christ's feet before us, is expressive of his kingly power in executing judgment. The time of the manifestation of this prerogative may also be gathered from these passages. Christ has not yet fully entered, as we have observed, into his office as king, nor shall he, until his second coming; for then it is that his power in executing judgment shall be displayed to all men. Before his kingdom comes, and he is universally acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords, he shall destroy his adversaries, and this shall be accomplished at his appearing, for the apostle teaches us that, "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and that, "the Lord shall consume the wicked one with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming."* Then "the wicked shall be rooted out of the earth;"

* 2 Thess. i. 7, 8, and ii. 8.

the tares shall be gathered from among the wheat and cast into the fire ; for, as our blessed Master teaches us, at the end of this age, “ the Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity ; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire : there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”* It is evident that Christ has not yet entered upon this part of his office as king ; but this he shall do when he shall appear the second time to judge the quick and the dead, and to receive “ the throne of his father David,”—a throne set up over defeated enemies.

In the mean time, let us learn that this awful power is in Christ’s hands ; that God in mercy stays the exercise of it, “ not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”† Let us then beware, lest we fall under this power of Christ in judgment. We are especially exposed to it, if having a name to be his we are yet opposed to him, baptised but apostate enemies in the camp. Let us remember that he who possesses this power to execute vengeance is, as we have seen, possessed of power to judge exactly and truly of each. Hence a mere outward partaking of gospel privileges cannot save us from the wrath to come ; nay, these things will but add to our condemnation if we are not in

* Matt. xiii. 38—43.

† 2 Pet. iii. 9.

heart and soul what we are by name and profession. Before long Christ will come to separate the sheep and the goats; let us therefore now "judge ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord; repent as truly of our past sins, having a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, and a stedfast purpose of leading a new life," and so shall we "lift up our heads" at the approach of Christ's second advent, knowing that "to them that look for him" he comes, in order that, fully consummating his offices as our Redeemer, he may confer upon his people the fulness of the blessings he died to purchase for them, and now lives and reigns, and shall reign for ever to bestow.

But while the emblem before us is thus manifestly to be referred to Christ as king executing judgment, yet because, as we have before observed, Christ's offices run, as it were, into one another, so that they cannot be separated, we may consider it as admitting at least of application to what refers more immediately to him as our priest. Applied thus we may view the words before us as, first, representing to us Christ's sufferings for us, and therefore also his sympathy with us in our sufferings. That Christ has suffered for us we may take as implied when it is said, that "his feet were like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," by referring to the twenty-seventh chapter of Exodus, where Moses having been commanded to construct an altar, is fur-

ther directed to overlay the whole of it with brass, as well as to make all the instruments belonging to it of the same metal, (verses 1—3.) The object of thus overlaying the altar is manifest: it was to enable it, while only made of wood, yet to bear, without being destroyed or injured, the fire by which the sacrifices were consumed. And this had all a spiritual import. The altar, (we are taught by St. Paul, in the tenth verse of the last chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews,) no less than the sacrifice upon, and the priest that ministered at it, was a type of Christ. In that it was of wood, it represented the humanity of our Saviour; while its brazen covering, which prevented the destruction of the weaker part by the action of the fire, represents, just as the burning and yet unconsumed bush did to Moses, the divine nature of our Lord sustaining his humanity, and enabling it undestroyed to endure the fire of God's justice poured out on him as our sin-offering. "Our God," the apostle tells us, "is a consuming fire;"* and hence the church is, by the prophet Isaiah, represented as inquiring, "Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" The answer given is to the effect that our holy, harmless, and undefiled God-incarnate-Saviour has done so for us;† therefore now no longer is God to be viewed as a "consuming

* Heb. xli. 29.

† Isa. xxxiii. 14—16.

fire," but as a reconciled Father, by those who come through Christ. Throughout his whole life Jesus bore unconsumed this fire as our substituted sacrifice, but then it burned fiercest as the fiery baptism * of his death approached. In the agonies of Gethsemane and the last awful hours upon the cross, he endured what mortal nature alone could not have supported. When his soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," and his mind was so agonised that he sweat as it were "great drops of blood," and when he uttered that fearful cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—when thus the support of the Divine countenance was hidden from him, "the powers of darkness" had their hour of triumph, and death was hastened by his broken heart,†—then he was touched by that fire which cannot be quenched, and which no man but he could have endured undestroyed. But he was God in our frail nature, and therefore he endured that fire, and came forth unscathed, having satisfied the demands of justice, and made peace for sinners with the Holy One.

But this also, as we have said, involves the blessed and most comfortable doctrine of Christ's sympathy with his people in their sufferings. In the passage in Exodus to which we last referred, we read that not only was the altar to be overlaid with brass, but that

* Matt. xx. 22, 23, and Luke xii. 50.

† Psa. lxix. 20, with Mark xv. 43, 44, and John xix. 31—33.

all the instruments of it were to be of the same material, for they also were to bear the fire. The people of God, while they are delivered by virtue of Christ's sufferings from the final punishment due to sin, are yet exposed to, and have to endure their share of the various sorrows, sufferings, and trials which are the lot of human kind, the growth of sin,

“That brought into this world a world of woe.”

But God, who overrules all things to his glory and our good, brings forth out of this eater meat, and out of this strong one sweetnes* to his people. As he made Satan, the lord of pride, become to his servant Paul a teacher of humility,† so he causes trials, the offspring of sin, to conduce to holiness. They are made needful parts of that discipline which we require in order to fit us for that future and nobler state of existence to which we are called :

“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown;
No traveller ever reach'd that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briers on the road.

.
For he who knew what human hearts would prove,
How slow to learn the dictates of his love,
That hard by nature, of stubborn will,
A life of ease would make them harder still,

* Judges xiv. 14.

† 2 Cor. xii. 7.

In pity to the souls his grace design'd
 To rescue from the ruins of mankind,
 Call'd for a cloud to darken all their years,
 And said, ' Go, spend them in the vale of tears.'
 O balmy gales of soul-reviving air !
 O salutary streams, that murmur there !
 These flowing from the fount of grace above,
 Those breath'd from lips of everlasting love !'

That sorrows are thus turned into fatherly chastisements, and made all "to work together for good," is one great consolation to the believer under trials. Another is, that Christ has passed through the same path before us, and now has a "fellow-feeling" for us in our distresses, and that in all our affliction he is afflicted.* In this view of the emblem before us, we may observe that, when his feet are represented as if burning in a furnace, it may serve to show us that he is with and feels for even the lowliest of his children, when cast into the furnace of affliction. Thus he entered the furnace and abode in it with the three noble-minded Jews, who chose the favour of God with the furnace of the Babylonish king, rather than that monarch's smile with idolatry; and while God preserved them from danger, he caused the fire only to consume their bonds and set them free.† And thus he is ever with his people in their afflictions to give support under them, and to make them

* Isa. Ixiii. 9.¹

† Dan. iii. 25.

become the means of sanctification. Hence he declares by the prophet Isaiah, that he refines his people, and chooses them "in the furnace of affliction." (chap. xlviii. 10.) And in the third chapter of the prophet Malachi, Christ is spoken of as sitting "as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (verse 3.) Here Jesus is represented as sitting, as the refiner of metals does by the furnace in which he has placed his metal to watch the process, to observe the operation of afflictions upon his people, in order that, at the right moment, he may deliver them; for "he doth not afflict willingly or grieve the children of men," and therefore will not lay on them any more suffering, or for any longer time than he, in his infinite wisdom and boundless love, knows to be absolutely necessary for them, in order that, "the dross being taken away," they may "come forth vessels for the finer,"* "meet for the master's use."

But further: when Christ's feet are compared in Daniel and the passage before us to brass, we may be taught hereby the eternity of his kinghood and stability of his kingdom, as also the faithfulness and immutability of his promises. Considering the first of these truths as hereby indicated, we are then by

* Prov. xxv. 4; and 2 Tim. ii. 21.

this emblem led to view Christ our king as the great antagonist to the image of royalty seen in the vision of Nebuchadnezzar, and his kingdom as the great successor to the kingdoms of that wondrous, world-history-containing dream. That vision presented an image whose superior parts were, indeed, strong, but resting on feet partly of clay, and therefore essentially weak and liable to destruction. Accordingly, 'in the vision there appeared further a self-moved stone, which "smote the image upon his feet, and brake them to pieces. Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them. And the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." Now, Daniel interprets all this to represent the contrast between Christ and his kingdom, and earthly monarchs and their kingdoms, and that the former shall destroy the latter, and endure for ever: "In the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever;" which all agrees with the eternity ascribed to Christ's kingdom by the same prophet, in the seventh chapter of his prophecy, and its destruction

of "and substitution for all human principalities." Christ as king is, therefore, eternally strong, and his dominion is for ever. .

If we consider this emblem as illustrative of the immutability of Christ's promises, these are as eternal as his dominion. His kingly word can no more fail than his kingly power cease: "The foundation of God standeth sure;" and the church is represented by the prophet as rejoicing that God's "counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."† With him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And all this faithfulness and immutability centres in, and stands upon Jesus Christ; for the apostle tell us that "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God."‡ Christ, therefore, being the foundation of the unchangeableness of God's promises, he affords "strong consolation" to them that have fled to him; for God, "willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:

* See Dan. ii. 31—43, and vii. 13, 14, 17, 18, 22—27.

† Isa. xxv. 1.

‡ 2 Cor. i. 20. Bishop Middleton would thus translate this passage:—"How many soever be the promises of God, in him is the Yea, and in him is the Amen;" meaning, whatever God has promised, he will through Christ assuredly fulfil. This conveys the real sense of the passage more distinctly than our translation does.

that by two immutable things, (viz., his promise and his oath to the promised seed,) in which it was impossible for God to lie," all who flee to Jesus should have abundance of peace, and everlasting security.

Such comfortable truths may we draw from the emblem before us—an emblem, indeed, of vengeance to his adversaries, but of joy to his people. And, indeed, it is ever thus with Christ: to the one he is a savour of death, to the other of life; to the one he wears an aspect of terror, to the other of peace; even as the pillar of the cloud which accompanied Israel gave light to them, but cast darkness upon the Egyptians. If Christ has borne the fire of justice for us, being the sacrifice for our sins; then if we have by faith laid hold of him as our altar of refuge, we may boldly say, Who shall condemn us when Christ has died for us? If Christ has passed through the road however rough, and encountered the storms however violent, which we have to experience, let us remember that he is with us, and feels for us, and will in due time deliver us, having first sanctified our trials to us. As his garment extends to his feet and is adorned at its hem, thus teaching us the security and sanctification of his humblest child, so his feet being of brass^o may give to such, as we have observed, the consolatory assurance of his tender sympathy. Hereby, also, Christ is figured to us as the mighty

king, about to set up an eternal kingdom: in this prospect we should rejoice, and for this event we should be looking and prepared. Finally, all that God has promised is in Christ secured; for the promises are to him on certain conditions, which conditions he has fulfilled. These promises, like a pillar of eternal brass, are "for ever settled in heaven." Whatever God has spoken, shall come to pass; whatever he has promised, that Christ will do. Resting on Jesus Christ, who is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever," the Christian may, therefore, be in perfect peace and quiet confidence. The promises to each believer, and those to the church at large, shall fully be brought to pass at the appointed time; "therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."* Let us, therefore, be "shod with the firm footing of the gospel," † resting on the faithfulness of Christ, "the faithful witness;" and thus we shall stand in the evil day, and stand even to the end.

* 1 Cor. xv. 58.

† Eph. vi. 13—17. Our translation is, "the preparation of the gospel," which is an obscure expression. Parkhurst is of opinion that the best rendering is as given above, and that it refers to the military shoes of the Romans, which were furnished with spikes, so that the soldiers might stand firm.

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR KING.

THE POWER OF HIS VOICE.

"And his voice as the sound of many waters."—Verse 15.

THE emblem here employed by the apostle is expressive of majesty and power, and as such is used to signify the might of the command of our king, Jesus Christ. The agreement which we have hitherto observed between the description here given of the appearance of the Son of man, and that which Daniel gives of the appearance of the same being to him, may still be traced. In the tenth chapter and end of the sixth verse of the book of that prophet, he tells us of the being who appeared to him “in the similitude of the sons of men,” that “the voice of his words was like the voice of a multitude.”

We do not find the similitude now before us used by our Saviour as his title in addressing any of the seven churches, and we can therefore only endeavour

to draw from it such instruction as it obviously may teach us.

The Bible is a book of the sublimest and truest poetry. All that nature has of grand, beautiful and sweet, is employed in holy writ to give high, lively and attractive figures of the excellency of Christ Jesus. The truth of this observation is evident to all who have read the Bible with attention. All the glories of nature being thus employed have, in the Christian's eyes, a new splendour cast around them. When he goes forth and views the delights which nature spreads before him, he not only sees in them their intrinsic loveliness, or hears them announcing that "the hand that made them is divine;" but he sees in them emblems, and hears from them voices, which show forth the glories of redemption and express the Saviour's love. Indeed, the book of Nature, bright as it is and open before all, is never read aright by any until first the entrance of God's word has given "light and understanding." But when once the Spirit of God has opened "our eyes to see the great and wondrous things of God's word," then a new light is cast on nature, making it radiant with a brightness not its own, even the light of "the Sun of righteousness." If we would see and delight in the full beauty of nature, we must then first see and delight in the truths of revelation. Thus we shall see a covenant God in the works of nature; those

works which were once perfect, now defiled, but, 'oh glorious truth! to be restored to primeval holiness, loveliness, and beauty.

" So reads he nature, whom the lamp of truth
 Illuminates. Thy lamp, all-glorious Word!
 He discerns in all what, with stupid gaze
 Of ignorance, till then he overlook'd,
 A ray of heavenly light, gilding all forms
 - Terrestrial, in the vast and the minute;
 The unambiguous footsteps of the God,
 Who gives its lustre to an insect's wing,
 And wheels his throne upon the rolling worlds.
 But in vain thy creatures testify of thee,
 Till thou proclaim thyself!"

But when he does to the soul reveal himself, then, to use again the beautiful language of the same sweet Christian poet, we perceive that—

" One Spirit, his
 Who wore the platted thorns with bleeding brows,
 Rules universal nature. Not a flower
 But shows some touch, in freckle, streak, or stain,
 Of his unrivall'd pencil
 Happy who walks with him!—whom what he finds
 Of flavour or of scent in fruit or flower,
 Or what he views of beautiful and grand
 In nature, from the broad majestic oak
 To the green blade that twinkles in the sun,
 Prompts with remembrance of a present God!
 His presence, who made all so fair, perceived,
 Makes all still fairer. As with him no scene
 Is dreary, so with him all seasons please."

The emblem here used as to the voice of the Son of man, is one of those beautiful and expressive figures God has been pleased to take from nature to represent to us our Saviour: "His voice was as the sound of many waters." Who that has listened to the voice of the never-silent sea, "with all its roaring multitude of waves," making everlasting harmony, either on the lonely shore or "far out amidst the melancholy main," has not felt his very soul awe-struck by its majesty and delighted with its melody? Or who has not felt the same feelings when listening to the sweet inland sound of murmuring stream, or the peaceful lapse of some full broad river, or to the roaring of the torrent or cataract? "The awful sound of waters in the ear," is the most solemn yet most sweet of Nature's harmonies. With all her music she has not any sounds so grand, so impressive, so solemn, and withal so sweet and soothing, as is the sound of "many waters." Hence, when in two other passages in the Revelation, St. John would convey to us some idea of that full-toned harmony of heaven which, in the solitude of Patmos, reached his enraptured ears, he compares it to "the voice of many waters."* This simile evidently combines majesty and melody, sweetness and solemnity. Well, therefore, may it be the emblem of the voice of our King; for his word is powerful yet tender, majestic

* Rev. xiv. 2, and xix. 6.

yet full of love ! He speaks, and the earth trembleth ; but to his saints he speaketh peace.

Many and glorious things are spoken in Scripture of the voice of the Son of man. In the Gospel it is heard in accents of tenderest love, as well as of sovereign power. Christ is in it the voice, or word of God, revealing to us the Divine mind and purposes towards men. As such, he gives to us that information as to the way of acceptance with God, and a future state, of which all wise men in every age have acknowledged the necessity, and earnestly desired. Without this voice directing us we should have groped in darkness, and died in terror, going we could not tell whither, to meet we could not tell what. Our highest attainment would have been that of the poor heathen, who said, "Defiled I entered life, I have passed through it with misery, and I leave it full of terror ; O great First Cause, have pity upon me !" But Jesus, as the voice of God, reveals to us life and immortality. As our prophet he reveals these things unto us, while as our king he proclaims with authority the glad tidings of pardon. He uttereth his voice ; to men he calls, and his voice is to the sons of men. He announces to them as "a prince" * what he has taught as prophet—a message of love, of mercy, and of eternal glory ! He opens heaven to our view, and promises it to us as our rest ; while he explains to us the object of our

* Acts v. 31.

sojourn on earth ; that while here we are soldiers in the army of which he is king, and that he in wisdom subjects us to such discipline as is necessary for our reception into a higher and happier state of existence, where our “eye shall see the king in his beauty.”

Because Jesus Christ as our kingly prophet thus speaks of salvation to his people, therefore, says the Psalmist, “I will hear what God the **LORD** will speak : for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints : but let them not turn again to folly.”* To them he speaketh comfortably, crying unto them that their warfare is accomplished, and their iniquities pardoned.† He calls with power to the sinner to repent, and the backsliding to return ; and his sheep hear his voice, they know and follow it.‡ The gracious words of Christ are dear to his people. His sovereign voice stills for them every storm, and quiets every wave—He, as of old, speaks, and there is a calm ; so that, with the disciples, we may exclaim of more dangerous and afflictive storms and waves than those they met, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!”§

“Is not the power as strange, the love as blest,
As when he said, Be still, and ocean sank to rest?”

To listen to the kingly, gracious voice of Jesus, is our privilege and duty. Let us pray that we may be

* Psa. lxxxv. 8.

† Isa. xl. 1, 2.

‡ John x.

§ Matt. viii. 24, 27.

kept lovingly obedient to it. Thus it will not only give us peace and comfort, but it will direct us so that we shall be kept in the straight and narrow path which leadeth to life, and he will, as our Ruler, guide us by his counsel here, and until he afterwards receives us to glory. Listening to him now proclaiming pardon, we shall find peace ; hearkening to his voice as our king, teaching us our duty and giving us laws, we shall be acknowledged as his subjects ; and he will finally make us partakers of his glorious kingdom. “ If any man serve me, let him follow me ; and where I am there shall also my servant be : if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.”*

But besides its prophetic-kingly power in proclaiming peace and teaching duty, which we shall have occasion more particularly to observe when we notice Christ as our prophet, the voice of Christ is spoken of in Scripture as expressive of his kingly power in awaking the dead to resurrection, in pronouncing judgment, and in the execution of it ; and this is the power more especially intended in the words before us.

The resurrection of the dead is represented as effected by the kingly authority of Christ’s voice. This our blessed Lord himself teaches us in the fifth chapter of the Gospel by St. John, saying, “ The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his (*i.e.* the Son of man’s) voice, and shall

* John xii. 26.

come forth; they that have done good, unto (or, rather, *at*, see Parkhurst) the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto (*at*) the resurrection of damnation." (verses 28, 29.) "The voice of the archangel," which is the voice of Jesus Christ, the prince of angels, "and the trump of God," shall be heard, and thereby the dead shall be raised.* The deadly stillness of the grave shall be startled by Christ's kingly voice, and the dust shall hear and obey. He who spoke creation into being at the first, shall, with the like omnipotent word, recreate, as it were, the dissolved bodies of the dead, refashioning them from the dust. Mighty death has already confessed the dominion of the Son of man; for death indeed grasped, but could not retain Him, "because it was not possible that he should be holden of it." As erewhile he spake, and at his sovereign word disappointed death gave up his prey, and Lazarus came forth from the tomb; even so, hereafter, shall the dust be animated, and the graves be emptied at his voice, and all who have died shall come forth, re-clothed in human form, to stand at his tribunal.

But further: the power of Christ in pronouncing judgment, and the consequent execution of it, is represented in Scripture by the power of his voice. His voice pronounces right and everlasting sentence; and at his voice who speaks and it is done, who commands

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.

and it stands fast,* the sentence of his lips is executed. Hence, in the second psalm, when Christ's triumph over his enemies is predicted, it is said that he “shall speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” (verse 5.)

But Christ's power in these respects is very grandly described, under the figure of the might of his voice, in the twenty-ninth psalm; where, after the mighty of the earth have been called upon to worship Christ, it is added, that his judgments are great and about to be executed; and they are thus described:

“ The voice of Jehovah is on the waters,
 The God of glory thundereth :
 The voice of Jehovah is powerful,
 The voice of Jehovah is majestic :
 The voice of Jehovah breaketh the cedars,
 Jehovah breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.
 He maketh Lebanon to skip like a calf,
 And Sirion like a young buffalo.
 The voice of Jehovah striketh flames of fire,
 The voice of Jehovah shaketh the wilderness :
 Jehovah shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh.
 Jehovah maketh the oaks to tremble,
 And strippeth bare the forests :
 And from his temple his voice proclaimeth his glory.
 Jehovah sitteth above the water-floods,
 Jehovah sitteth a king for ever :
 Jehovah giveth strength to his people,
 Jehovah giveth his people the blessing of peace.” †

* Psa. xxxiii. 9.

† Fry's translation.

Here the voice of Jehovah is represented, evidently, as executing judgment, as well as proclaiming from the temple his glory, (verse 9,) which glory is the fact that Jehovah sitteth a king for ever, giving strength and peace to his people. (verses 10, 11.) Now it is evident that this Jehovah king, thus blessing his people, is the Lord Jesus Christ, for he is the “king set upon the holy hill of Sion,” possessed of everlasting dominion; and he is exalted to give these blessings to his people, for “of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Again, in that magnificent psalm, the forty-sixth, we read the same power indicated by the same emblem, when, describing the last judgments, it is said, “the heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.” (verse 6.) The same emblem is also used to signify the same power by the prophet Isaiah, who thus describes the execution of God’s judgments:

“Jehovah shall cause his glorious voice to be heard,
And the lightning down of his arm to be seen;
With wrath indignant, and a flame of consuming fire;
With a violent storm, and rushing showers, and hailstones.

By the voice of Jehovah the Assyrian shall be beaten down;
He, that was ready to smite with his staff.” *

And so also in the sixth verse of the last chapter of the same prophet, the end of judgment is thus described:

“ A voice of tumult from the city! a voice from the temple!
The voice of Jehovah! rendering recompense to his enemies :”

which remarkably agrees with what we read in the sixteenth of Revelation, where we are told that, when the final act of vengeance shall have been accomplished upon God’s enemies, there shall come “ a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done !”

Comparing all these passages with the one before us, it appears evident that the mighty power of voice here attributed to our Saviour, is intended to indicate chiefly his regal power of judgment and passing sentence upon his enemies, whom, we read, he “ shall consume with *the spirit of his mouth*, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming.” †

In fine, let us observe, dear reader, that we must all hear this voice of Christ; either now we shall joyfully hearken to it in its power of love, as he is our Royal Prophet, or hereafter we must tremblingly hear it in its power of judgment, as a sovereign pass-

* Isa. xxx. 30, 31: Lowth’s translation. † 2 Thess. ii. 8.

ing sentence on his defeated enemies. Therefore, let us ask ourselves have we listened to our Saviour's gracious words in his gospel, wherein, as our Prophet-King, he speaks to us in accents of love and mercy? "Behold," says our blessed Lord, addressing the Laodicean church, "behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me;*" and let us remember that we cannot tell when he may cease to speak to us with the voice of mercy and invitation. Now is to each of us "the accepted time, now is *the day* of salvation;" therefore, "to-day, while it is called to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." Let, also, the majesty of the Speaker command our attention: "See," says the apostle, "that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven: whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven." It is Jesus who thus speaks to us, "the mediator of the new covenant, whose blood is the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel:"† the blood of Abel cries for vengeance, the blood of Christ speaketh peace. By this Jesus, his Son, hath God

* Rev. iii. 20.

† Heb. xii. 24—26.

"spoken unto us in these last days ;" "therefore ought we to give the more earnest heed to the word spoken : for how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him ?" * We are, in very awful language, warned of the fearful consequences of refusing to hear the voice of Christ addressed to us, as our Prophet-King, in mercy, when he thus speaks by Solomon : " Because I have called, and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded ; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof : I also will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear cometh ; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind ; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer ; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me : for that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord : they would none of my counsel : they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices." † By such his voice shall be heard in fearful judgment, passing inevitable sentence upon them, saying, " Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." Let us,

* Heb. i. 2 ; ii. 1—3, and x. 28, 29. † Prov. i. 24—31.

therefore, diligently hearken to Wisdom, who "crieth without, and uttereth her voice in the streets;" let us "turn at his reproof," and the Spirit shall be poured out upon us, and God's word revealed unto us,* and we shall escape from the wrath which is to come.

Happy are those who now hearken to Christ's voice of love and mercy speaking from Calvary, to sinners. Happy are those who with heart, as well as voice, proclaim, "Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!" and who, therefore, yield obedience to Christ's voice as their law, and are thus guided through the perplexing paths of life to the kingdom of God. They may triumph over death, through Jesus, death's conqueror; looking through the dark valley to the morning of resurrection, when Jesus shall call, and they shall answer; when he shall have a desire to the work of his hands, and the change shall come upon them,† and they shall come forth from the chamber of death clad in glorious bodies made like unto Christ's glorified body. The Son of man, possessor of "the keys of hell and death," shall, by his omnipotent voice, open those gates which cannot prevail ‡ against his church, and bring forth his people at the first and glorious resurrection, to live and reign with him throughout the

* Prov. i. 20—23.

† See Job xiv. 14, 15.

‡ Matt. xvi. 18.

endless ages of eternity ! “ Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection : on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”*

* Rev. xx. 6.

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR PROPHET.

IT is not without reason that our Redeemer, in the description here given of him, is called “the Son of man;” for the glories with which he is represented as invested, are those which he has acquired as “the man Christ Jesus.” In that human body in which he was humiliated and suffered, he is now exalted and glorified. In this body, and on account of this humility of his, God “hath highly exalted him,” placing him at his own right hand, and causing “angels, authoritics, and powers” to be subject unto him. But as he stooped to serve and rescue man, so also is he exalted to be the head of his body, the church, in order that he may supply to it, out of his fulness, all the blessings of the everlasting covenant. Having man’s recovery in view, he became invested with the threefold offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, to teach us, to sanctify us, and to rule in and for us; and having been on earth anointed and invested with them, which sum up the glories of unfallen man, he •

has now passed through the heavens to exercise for, and apply to his people these offices. The minuteness of the description here given of our Saviour's appearance is intended, no doubt, to point out to Christ in glory, yet in the midst of his church; possessed of, and exercising, and to exercise to the end, these offices for the recovery of his people, according to his parting promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

In the portion of this description of the Son of man which we have already noticed, we have endeavoured to show that he is marked to be our High Priest and our King, both distinctively and unitedly. In what remains for us to consider, we shall find him marked, especially, as the great Prophet of his church; while, at the same time, his majesty and priesthood are also implied. As of each of the previous offices there are three marks recorded, so also to this office the like number of particulars designate our Saviour. These three are, first, that "he had in his right hand seven stars;" second, that "out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword;" and third, that "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

But before we consider these figures as indicative of the prophetic office of our blessed Saviour, it will be well that we should consider somewhat of the nature and object of that office, its connection with

his two other offices, and the time and manner of his becoming the prophet of his church.

In order that we may understand something of the nature and object of the prophetic office as attributed to Jesus Christ, it will be desirable to refer to some of the leading prophecies of him in this character which are to be found in the Old Testament Scripture. It may, indeed, be in general stated, that all prophets were more or less types or subordinates to Jesus Christ in this office. Considering, then, the office of all these in general, we shall find that they were persons commissioned of God to speak to men, or rather, through whom he himself addressed himself to men. Thus St. Paul, in the opening of the epistle to the Hebrews, declares, that "God, at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets." Now, the object of God thus speaking to men through man, was to teach us divine truth. Literally the title prophet signifies one who foretells; but it is used in sacred Scripture in a much larger sense, namely, in the sense we have expressed, to signify a person inspired by the Holy Spirit, declaring divine truths to men.* We have examples of the prophetic office having this meaning in the New Testament, as where it is said of Zacharias that he "was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied;" which he did when he

* 2 Pet. i. 21.

taught that Jesus was the promised Redeemer, and that John should be his forerunner.* In the same sense, also, we find it said of Judas and Silas, in the fifteenth of Acts and thirty-second verse, that they were prophets, or inspired teachers. And indeed the word is used by St. Paul in a still larger sense, as signifying in general public preaching and teaching in the church.† In the Old Testament, also, we have an example of this extensive meaning of the title prophet; when, as we read in the first verse of the seventh chapter of Exodus, the Lord appoints Aaron to be the prophet of Moses, that is, to be his spokesman, in order to convey to Pharaoh the Divine will and intentions which were to be communicated to Moses.

Now, the title of prophet given to Christ is to be understood in not only its primary, but in also its most extensive import. He, in this character, has foretold future events; and still more largely he has revealed to us the will of God and sacred truth, and is the great instructor and preacher of the church.

But besides the prophets all, in some degree, typifying Christ in this office, it is expressly foretold that he should occupy it for us. There are many passages which foretell this either more or less directly. He is, for example, foretold as our prophet, or the revealer of God's will to men, by Malachi, when he

* Luke i. 67—80.

† 1 Cor. xiv. 1—4.

styles the Messiah, “ The messenger (or angel) of the covenant.”* In that remarkable prediction relative to Christ which is contained in the ninth chapter of the book of Daniel, we find that he is announced as our prophet, as well as our priest and king. Thus we read: “ Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and *prophet*,† and to anoint the most Holy.” (verse 24.) Here the time of the accomplishment of redemption, of the sealing as prophet and the anointing as priest of the Saviour, is fixed; while, in the next verse, the time, yet to come, when he, thus anointed as he was at Jordan, and become the Messiah, or the Christ, shall be manifested as Prince is also specified, when it is added, “ Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto *the Messiah the Prince* shall be seven weeks.” (verse 25.)

Again: though not called by the very name of our prophet, yet we have our Saviour speaking by Isaiah, and declaring in substance that this office should be

* Mal. iii. 1.

† Such is the marginal reading in accordance with the Hebrew, to which also agrees the Septuagint. See Sir Isaac Newton on this important prophecy.

filled by him for his church, in the opening verses⁴ of the sixty-first chapter of that prophet. This passage is noteworthy on many accounts. It runs as follows : “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me ; because the Lord hath *anointed me to preach* good tidings unto the meek ; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound ; to proclaim the acceptable⁵ year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God ; to comfort all that mourn ; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness ; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.” Here, in a passage which our blessed Lord himself, as we shall again have to notice, applies to himself, is described Christ’s anointing to be Prophet by the Spirit of the Lord, and his prophetic office in all its fulness, including not only the prediction of events to come, but the revelation of God’s will to man, and the preaching of the gospel of peace.

But not alluding to other passages, as in the Psalms in which the prophetic office of our Saviour is foretold, we shall only notice that most eminent prediction of him as our ‘prophet which is given by Moses. This we find recorded in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, in the following words :

"The **LORD** thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken; according to all that thou desiredst of the **LORD** thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the **LORD** my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not. And the **LORD** said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken. I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him," (verses 15—19.)

That our Saviour and his prophetic office are here foretold, is not a matter of conjecture, but of certain interpretation. The very words of the voice from heaven, which on the holy mount charged us to "hear him," point out Jesus to be the Prophet of whom it is said, "unto him shall ye hearken," and inattention to whose teaching was to be so solemnly required. We find, also, in the Acts of the Apostles, Peter in his second discourse, and Stephen in his address previous to his martyrdom, quoting this announcement of Moses as predicting Jesus as our prophet.* These words of Moses, and this promise

* Acts iii. 22, 23, and vii. 37.

of God through him, led the Jews continually to expect the advent of some illustrious prophet; and hence, when they were aroused by the preaching of the Baptist, they "sent Priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?" And amongst other inquiries, they asked, "Art thou that prophet?"* Hence, also, when the multitude were miraculously fed, they were so convinced thereby that He who so fed them was the prophet "like unto Moses," who had fed their forefathers with "manna in the desert," that they exclaimed, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world!" And again, knowing also that this prophet was to be a king, we are told that they intended "to take him by force and make him a king."† On another remarkable occasion, when on "the last day, that great day of the feast" of tabernacles, Jesus, alluding to the custom of drawing water at that feast, had promised heavenly water to those that came to him, thus reminding the people of Moses, "who had given their forefathers miraculous water in the wilderness," and of this promise of a prophet to come like unto him, they said, "therefore, when they heard this saying, of a truth this is the prophet."‡

The passage before us from Deuteronomy, as being the most eminent prediction of Christ as the

* John i. 19, 21, and 25.

† Ib. vi. 14, 15.

‡ Ib. vii. 37—40.

Prophet of his church, merits particular attention. In it we learn that a great prophet was to come after Moses, and in many points similar to Moses, and the object also of his being raised up and sent to men. He was to speak for God to men, as the great revealer and teacher: "I will put," saith the Lord, "my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him." This promise was given when the people requested that they might not again hear the voice of the Lord, lest they should die, but supplicated for a mediator. And this indeed was the great object of the law—to humble man, and make him to feel his need of one to stand between God and him. Hence the Lord was pleased at their request, and gave them this remarkable promise of the Messiah, by far the largest and most particular which had yet been given to men. This description of the office of Christ as teacher of God's mind to men, is expressed in similar words through the prophet Isaiah, when Jehovah declares to Christ, "I have put my words in thy mouth."* St. John especially points out Jesus as our Prophet in his gospel. Thus he gives us much more the discourses of our blessed Lord than his actions. He also records, as we have seen, two instances in which his actions and his words appeared to the people to identify him

* Isa. li. 16.

as the Prophet "like unto Moses," whom Moses had foretold. This evangelist, moreover, gives Jesus a title, and records words of his which strikingly mark him as being the foretold prophet in this respect, that God's word was put in his mouth, and that he spoke to men what the Father had commanded him to speak. This title which St. John gives to our Saviour is found in the opening of the Gospel, where he is styled, "The Word;" which title is again given him in the nineteenth chapter of the Revelation and thirteenth verse. Remarkably agreeing also with this promise is the language of our Saviour, as recorded (among other passages, to quote one only,) in the twelfth chapter of St. John and the last two verses, where he says, "I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak."

Hence, therefore, in the announcement of Moses, Christ as our prophet is predicted, as well as the object of his office; which is, to teach us the Divine will and to speak for God to men. He comes an accredited and promised ambassador from heaven, to reveal to us the way of eternal life and peace with God. How diligently, then, should we hearken to

his teaching; attending to the voice from heaven which has charged us, saying, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; *hear ye him.*"

Another particular to be noticed of this great Prophet is, that he was to be a partaker of flesh and blood; he was to be from the midst of them, of their brethren. (verses 15, 18.) This was necessary in order to answer the purpose required; which was to speak to men, in order to comfort and instruct them. Superhuman beings might speak eloquently and powerfully, but not comfortably, instructively or suitably to men. Such an one as this promised prophet, one of our brethren, Job felt the necessity of in his distress, when he exclaims, " He is not a man, as I am, that I should answer him, and we should come together in judgment. Neither is there any daysman (marg. *umpire*—*Septuagint, mediator*) betwixt us, that might lay his hand upon us both." It is remarkable that it is stated as a requisite for each of the three offices of king, and priest, and prophet, that the bearer of them should be of his brethren. In the provision relative to a king, when such an officer should be established in Israel, it is ordered that " one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother,"* We have before observed that this was necessary to the exercising of

* Deut. xvii. 15.

the office of the priesthood ; and here it is declared to be one of the marks of the great Prophet. Thus, in all things, and on all accounts, “it behoved Christ to be made like unto his brethren ;” and this he did when he “ was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” Here we may to our comfort reflect that, as partaker of our nature, he knows our ignorance and slowness to learn, and that he will adapt his teaching to our human capacity, and with divine patience bear our dulness and forgetfulness.

But we notice further, that this great Prophet was to be in particular like unto Moses. (verses 15, 18.) We have already seen how the remarkable coincidence between the miraculous food and water ministered by Jesus, and that given by Moses, connected with other things, filled the people at the time with the persuasion that this prophecy had found its fulfilment in Jesus. And Moses, indeed, in these things was typical of Jesus, who gives the true bread from heaven and the water of life to his people. When it was promised that the prophet who was to come should be like Moses, this in the first place signified his superiority to ordinary prophets ; for we read of Moses, that “ the **LORD** spake unto him face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend ; ” * and the Lord gives him pre-eminence above all others, even above Aaron and Miriam, when these spake against

* Ex. xxxiii. 11.

him: * hence it is said of him in the last chapter of Deuteronomy, that “ there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face.” (verse 10.) But such a prophet Jesus is declared to be. Thus, in the first chapter of St. John’s Gospel, the evangelist having contrasted the dispensations introduced by Moses and Jesus Christ, goes on to add, that to the latter, as prophet or heavenly teacher, belongs even a greater pre-eminence than that which belonged to Moses as prophet, saying, “ No man hath seen God at any time ; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (verses 17, 18.) Such, also, is the Baptist’s testimony to Christ Jesus as our prophet, when he says, “ He that cometh from above is above all : he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth : he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth. . . . He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.” † To Christ as excelling others as Moses did, and even infinitely excelling Moses himself as a prophet, St. Paul calls our attention, saying, “ Consider the apostle (that is, the prophet or teacher) and high priest of our profession; Christ Jesus ; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house. For this

* Numb. xii. 6—8.

† John iii. 31—34.

man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house. For every house is builded by some man; but he that built all things is God. And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a Son over his own house.* From which superiority, yet similitude, of Christ to Moses, the apostle urges that we should hear his voice with the most speedy and anxious attention: "For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven." The peculiar glory of the gospel dispensation as well as its peculiar responsibilities, result from the fact, that God hath "in these last days spoken unto us by his Son."

But not only was Jesus Christ the Prophet like unto Moses in his superiority to others, he was also, as Moses was, a man instructing men. The importance of this we have already observed. Again: Jesus, as Moses was, is a Mediator in the fullest sense of the title. Moses acted as mediator between God and Israel, by standing between both to convey God's word to them, and by making intercession to God for them; and hence he has this title of mediator given him by the apostle St. Paul, in the epistle to the

* Heb. iii. 1—6.

Galatians (chap. iii. 19.) That Jesus is such it were needless to prove to Christians: "The *man* Christ Jesus" is the only Mediator "between God and man;*" and he is thrice styled in the epistle to the Hebrews, the Mediator of the better, even the new covenant. He, uniting in his person both natures, stands between God and man, conveying the will of God to men, and making intercession for them to God. Again: Jesus, as Moses, was the opener of a new dispensation, as superior to that of Moses as he was himself superior to Moses: "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ;" and he is styled "the Mediator of the better covenant established upon better promises."†

From what we have thus considered, the nature of the prophetical office will appear. It is evident that its great object is to inform and enlighten man's understanding; for as the priestly office of Christ has especial reference to man's moral, so this office has to his intellectual nature; so as through the operation of both to restore man, and to re-invest him with kinghood along with, and by virtue of the kinghood of Christ Jesus. We have already seen the necessity of that work for us and in us which is implied in the priesthood of Christ, and our need of the work which is the object of his prophethood is equally manifest. The darkness and abominations of heathendom plainly

* 1 Tim. ii. 5.

† Heb. viii. 6; ix. 15, and xii. 24.

show the need of a Divine teacher, and manifest that “the world by wisdom knew not God;” and amongst nominal Christians, also, Jesus must enlighten our hearts and “open our understandings, that we may understand the Scriptures;”* or else amidst the clearest light we shall still walk in darkness. Without we have this office of our Saviour exercised in us we shall, therefore, never know the truth, or be wise unto salvation. We have observed the connexion of Christ’s triple offices; that he as prophet teaches, and as priest sanctifies, in order as king to make us kings. There is an inseparable connexion, as we have before observed, between these offices; so that while we may consider them distinctly, they yet must always be viewed as united. This union is pointed out in the voice from heaven after the transfiguration, as it is given in the gospel of St. Matthew: “This,” said the Divine voice, “this is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.”† Here, in brief, as in the passage we are considering in the Revelation more at large, Jesus is shown to be our king, priest, and prophet. When God declared him to be his “beloved Son,” this announced him to be our king; when it was added that in him God was “well pleased,” this declared him to be our priest; and when it was said, “hear ye him,” this designated him to be our prophet.

* Luke xxiv. 45.

† Matt. xvii. 5.

Man when he proceeded from the hands of his Maker " sealed up the sum, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty." * He was possessed of complete knowledge, perfect righteousness, and full dominion : he was a prophet, priest, and king. As a prophet, he knew God and understood his works ; as a priest, he was perfectly righteous, and could offer to God without a mediator his spiritual sacrifices, accepted in his own native rectitude ; as a king, God had invested him with the lordship of the earth ; all creation did him willing homage, as being God's vicegerent and representative. But too soon the gold was changed and the fine gold became dim. A subtle adversary attacked this noble and happy being with fatal success. The devil, perverting man's understanding and corrupting man's heart, persuading him to entertain a false idea of God's character, and to long for that which God had forbidden, hurried him into the fatal act of disobedience which caused the fall and curse :

Earth felt the wound, and Nature from her seat,
Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,
That all was lost !

Man thus lost his knowledge, he ceased to be a prophet ; he lost his righteousness, he ceased to be a priest ; and in consequence forfeiting his dominion, he ceased to be a king. Adam became ignorant, wicked,

and disloyal; the rest of creation, more loyal, renounced its obedience to him. And now man, with darkened mind, polluted heart, and lost inheritance, stands before the universe, "Ichabod," the glory departed, written on his brow.

Such man was, such man is. And there is ever something in man that whispers to him of a glory lost, of a brightness obscured, and leads him to aspire to its recovery. Men by the various pursuits of learning aim to regain lost knowledge, but never thereby reach its height. So also they aim to recover their righteousness; and hence the penances, the sufferings, and the sacrifices with which men, untaught of God, seek to atone for their sins. Nor less is man ever aiming to repossess dominion; indeed, there is no passion so universal as lust of power in some shape, of being able to call something our own. How vain and unsatisfactory all these natural strivings are, Scripture, human history, and experience unite to teach us. But yet they are important; for they tell of an original dignity, even as the curiously-wrought stones scattered in the desert tell the traveller that once cities and temples flourished where now are only sand and desolation. And not only on this account are these longings of man's soul important, but also because it is to them the gospel addresses itself; and by them the Holy Spirit acts to lead us to Jesus. It is to these feelings that such

beautiful invitations as that in the fifty-fifth of Isaiah, " Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters," refer, and that of our blessed Saviour, " Come unto me all ye that labour, and I will refresh you." Rightly used, these longings teach of a loss, and lead us to the means of recovery, that is, to Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is brought out in Scripture as our prophet, priest, and king, to be our great restorer—" the repairer of the breach;*" to bring men back to the mental and moral dignity in which we were created, and thereby to restore us also, finally, to our original exaltation. " For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."† The devil has depraved the understanding, polluted the heart, and consequently degraded man; Jesus Christ renews the mind, sanctifies the soul, and thus reinvests man with his original dignity, or rather exalts him to a nobler position. These things are taught us by the apostle in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians. The state of man by nature he depicts to be an understanding darkened and ignorant, and a blind and hardened heart, resulting in complete degradation. On the other hand, man in a state of grace is represented to be " taught by Christ as the truth is in Jesus," his understanding renewed, and the moral image of God

* Isa. liyiii. 12.

† 1 John iii. 8.

restored in the soul—renewed in knowledge, and renewed in holiness.* Thus, then, having lost everything in the first Adam, in “the second Adam, the Lord from heaven,” we regain all that we have forfeited. Hence it is that in Scripture we find the first and second Adam not unfrequently compared and contrasted. The first Adam was invested with every good gift, and placed in an exalted and happy position; but being assaulted by the devil he fell, and entailed his ruin on his posterity. The second Adam came to our low estate, and was attacked by the same enemy; he triumphed over that enemy, and thus restores to all his seed the blessings they have lost in their natural parent. The first Adam, with all things on his side, fell; the second Adam, with all things against him, triumphed. Jesus Christ, this second Adam, teaches man’s mind, purifies his soul, and restores him to his lost estate: in other words, he is our prophet, priest, and king; and the connexion between these three offices, and their operation for us in these respects, is obvious, for none can reign with him who are not first taught and sanctified by him; and even as our first parent lost his dignity by losing his understanding and his holiness, so our second parent restores us to our royal estate, by restoring our understanding and moral purity.

Now this being the process of restoration, it is

* Eph. iv. 18—24; Col. iii. 9—14.

evident that the first step to it is to obey that voice from heaven which has said, "Hear ye him;" hear him as our great teacher, so that we may be sanctified through his truth* as he is our priest, and finally reign with him as our king. It will, therefore, be an useful inquiry for us, before we proceed further, whether we have humbly and anxiously attended to this heavenly command? Have we taken our seat at the feet of Jesus, looking to him as our great prophet and only teacher? Are we taking our ideas of the character of God from his teaching, and not from our own vain imaginings? Are we forming our rule of right and wrong from his word, and not by the standard of the world's opinion? Are we drawing near to God in the way, the only way, that Jesus has pointed out, even through him; or are we trusting to some hope suggested by our own vain hearts? These are solemn inquiries. Upon the answer to them depends our interest in Jesus as our prophet, priest, and king, and consequently our blessedness in eternity!

Let us now proceed to consider the time when our blessed Saviour entered especially upon this office of Prophet of his church. Now, as he is styled he "which is, and which was, and which is to come,"† so is it as to these three offices: priest he *was*, prophet he *was*, and king he *shall be*; but as this title

* John xvii. 17.

† Rev. i. 8.

expresses his continual as well as his successive existence, so he is from the beginning, now, and ever shall be, all these three to his church. We have already observed that though from the beginning he was our high priest, yet at a particular time he was especially inducted, as it were, into that office; and that though from the first and now our king, yet the period of his public enthronement has not yet arrived. Of his office as our prophet we are to observe, that he was from the beginning when he taught our first parents to sacrifice, all along until his advent, and that he is now, and shall be for ever, mankind's great teacher; but yet there was a time when he especially became invested with this office, and a time when, in this especial sense, he laid it aside.

That he from the first was the "Word of God" to men, is evident from both the Old and New Testaments: "In the beginning was the Word;" and he was the angel so frequently called Jehovah, through whom God spake to the fathers of old. Thus the man who, after wrestling with Jacob all night, in the morning blessed him with a prophetical blessing, was evidently our Saviour acting herein, as Jacob's teacher or prophet; for while he is called a man, he at the same time declares himself to be the one of the hidden name, and Jacob commemorates his interview with him by calling the place "Peniel," that is, the

face of God : " For," he said, " I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved." * Very similar is the account of the angel who gave the information relative to Samson to his parents, as recorded in the thirteenth chapter of the book of Judges. But, indeed, it would occupy a large space to quote the passages in the Old Testament, in which the angel speaking to men is either in words, or by attributes, distinguished as Jehovah. Now, there is only one being to whom these two names can be given, even " the man that is Jehovah's fellow," † the " apostle and high priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." He was that angel who conducted Israel, whose voice they were to obey, and in whom the name of Jehovah was, and whom by their disobedience they provoked and tempted in the wilderness. ‡

But though he was always the channel of communication between God and man, there is yet a particular time when he was anointed to, and entered formally upon this office. This anointing and this time are distinctly marked in the New Testament.

We find that, under the Old Testament dispensation, kings, priests, and prophets were inducted into their offices by anointing with oil—a type of the Holy Spirit. Of the anointing of kings we have several instances, and all the Israelitish priests were to be

* Gen. xxxii. 24—30. † Zech. xiii. 7.

‡ Compare Ex. xxiii. 20—22, and 1 Cor. x. 9.

anointed with a peculiar oil, and we read also of the anointing of a prophet in the case of Elisha.* As Christ was prefigured by all these officers, so also was their anointing figurative of his: accordingly we find that he has not entered, in the strict sense, upon any of his offices until he first was anointed of God with the Holy Ghost;† thereby, indeed, obtaining the very title of the Christ, that is, the Anointed. He "glorified not himself" by taking these dignities to himself, but by the unction of the Spirit at his baptism he was called unto them of God. Being thus anointed and called, he was immediately led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, so that he might enter upon his offices for us, not only as one proved to be perfect, but also as one who is capable of entering into the feelings and temptations of those for and to whom he was to minister, having been in all points tempted as they are tempted. This is indeed one of the strongest consolations given us under the gospel, that our teacher, our priest, and our king, is also our brother, partaker of our flesh and blood, and all its trials.‡ Anointed of God, he has authority in his offices; clothed in our nature and tempted with our tempta-

* Examples of anointing of kings, 1 Sam. x. 1 and xvi. 13; and of priests, Ex. xxix. 7, and xxx. 30; and of prophets, 1 Kings xix. 16.

† Acts x. 38.

‡ Heb. ii. 14.

tions, he is suited to exercise them to our salvation and comfort. It may be remarked that David was anointed three different times: first, in private (1 Sam. xvi. 13); secondly, as king of Judah (2 Sam. ii. 4); thirdly, at the point of his highest exaltation, as king of all Israel (2 Sam. v. 3). Doubtless these were figures of the three great offices of Christ, the first of which he exercised in comparative privacy as our prophet, the second he entered upon in a more glorious and conspicuous manner as our priest, while his commencement of the third, as king of all the earth, shall be the highest point of his glory as Redecmer. The Son of God become Jesus of Nazareth, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and tempted in the wilderness, enters upon his office as our teacher with all that is needful, or that our hearts can desire; to him, therefore, let us give heed, for God has charged us, saying, "Hear ye him."

This striking connexion between the anointing and temptation of Jesus, and his entrance then immediately upon his office as prophet, is pointed out and announced by our Lord himself in the fourth chapter of the Gospēl according to St. Luke. Jesus, we are there told, led by the same Spirit which conducted him into the wilderness to be tempted, returned from the scene of his temptation into Galilee, and immediately "taught in the synagogues;" and coming "to Nazareth, where he had been brought

up, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day." The book of the prophet Isaiah was placed in his hands to read: " And when he opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me; because he hath *anointed me to preach the gospel* to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.*" (verses 14—21.) Here, therefore, our blessed Master himself marks the time when, and the manner of his entrance upon his office as our prophet. He entered first on this office, because the process of man's restoration follows the steps of his fall, and the mind must be enlightened in order to the purification of the heart, both being preparatory, and the requisite steps to, re-investment with original dignity.

But we have observed that, in the peculiar sense in which Christ entered upon his office as our prophet in this synagogue of Nazareth, he has now ceased to be our prophet. When he left this world he no longer, in this peculiar manner, was our teacher;

but he does still, however, in a certain and effectual sense, fill this office, carrying it on by the instrumentality of the Holy Spirit. This delegation of the office of instructor to the third Person of the Holy Trinity, is clearly taught by our Lord to his apostles, as when he declares that the Spirit is the “Spirit of truth;” that He should “teach them all things, and bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever Jesus had said unto them;” and that this Spirit should “testify of him.” So again, also, he says that, “when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and *he will show you things to come.* He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you.”* In agreement with all this, the apostle St. John attributes the spiritual knowledge of Christians to the teaching of the Holy Spirit, saying, “Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you: and ye need not that any man teach you; but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him.” (1 John xi. 20, 27.) And as, by the Spirit, Christ now carries forward that office which he personally fulfilled when here

* John xiv. 17, 26; xv. 26; and xvi. 13, 14.

on earth, so the Spirit fulfils this office by "the ministry of the word, which is therefore called "the sword of the Spirit;" * and this word is ministered by men appointed thereunto, who act as the "ambassadors of Christ." Thus we read, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, that Christ, having ascended, sent down the Holy Spirit, and by him appointed "divers orders" in his church, "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (verses 8—13.) Thus that office which Christ in person exercised on earth, he now carries on through his Spirit, who acts by the word, and the ministry of it: so that ministers of the Gospel appear for Christ; or, as the apostle says, "Now we then are *ambassadors for Christ*, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you, in *Christ's stead*, be ye reconciled unto God;" for he has given to his ambassadors "the ministry of reconciliation." †

Hence we may learn with what reverence and deep attention we should hear the ministry of the word. It is, indeed, but an "earthen vessel" which ministers it, but it is a "treasure" which he ministers. Jesus Christ by his Spirit, speaks through the weak instru-

* Eph. vi. 17.

† 2 Cor. v. 18—20.

ments he is pleased to employ, so that the excellency of the power may be of God, his strength being magnified in the weakness of the instruments. Man being thus used to speak for God to his fellows, it follows that, as our Lord declares, “he that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth Him that sent me.” *

But though our Lord does not any longer immediately exercise this office, yet, as we have seen, and as will appear from the portion of the description of his appearance we are now to consider, he is still the source and channel of revelation from God to man. Thus the Holy Spirit now teaches us by receiving and taking of the things of Jesus, and showing them unto us; for he speaks not of himself, but what he hears *that* he speaks to men. † So also the ministers of the Word speak not of themselves, but of “Christ Jesus the Lord;” and their word is therefore to be received “not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God.” Jesus is, then, still the mainspring of Divine instruction, the prophet of his Church. As such, he appears especially and more immediately in this book of the Revelation, which is “the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to show unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass.” And in the description

* Luke x. 16.

† John xvi. 13—15.

here given of his appearance to St. John, the particulars which yet remain to be noticed mark him as exercising the prophetic office now in his glory, in the midst of his Church.

May He teach us rightly to divide this portion of his word, and to draw from it the instruction which it is written to convey to us!

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR PROPHET.

THE MINISTRY.

“And he had in his right hand seven stars”—Verse 16.

THAT in these words Christ is set before us as the great Prophet or Teacher of his Church—exercising now that office especially by an appointed ministry—will appear very plainly from what we read in the following parts of this book. Our blessed Lord himself has taught us what these seven stars represent, saying, in the last verse of this chapter, “The mystery of the seven stars which thou sawest in my right hand. . . . The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches.” It is to these angels of the churches we find him addressing the several epistles to those seven churches, which form the contents of the second and third chapters. The inscription to each is, “Unto the angel of the church, write.” That these angels were the messengers, or persons appointed to minister to these churches, is evident. In accordance with this title and its duties is the

language of the prophet Malachi, who thus, not merely with reference to the Aaronical priesthood, but also to the ministry of the Gospel, describes the angel's office: "The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger (or the angel) of the LORD of Hosts."* Much similar, also, is the language of St. Paul. When speaking of the ministers of the Gospel, he says, "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ;"† that is, we are angels, or messengers, commissioned to announce a message for Christ, being thus his representatives or ambassadors.

The number of seven is here selected, as in other instances in this book, to represent perfection, and thus these stars, which in themselves stand for the ministry, by this number being assigned to them, stand as the representatives of the ministry in all ages, until the second coming of Jesus Christ. Indeed, it is worthy of notice how much employed the number of seven is in this Revelation. We have seven spirits, seven candlesticks, seven stars, seven angels, seven churches, seven epistles, seven lamps of fire, seven eyes and seven horns in the Lamb, seven-fold ascriptions of praise to the Lamb, seven seals, seven trumpets sounded by seven angels, seven thunders, and seven vials poured out by seven angels. So also we have the great dragon with seven heads, and seven

* Mal. ii. 7.

† 2 Cor. v. 20.

crowns upon his head, and his agent represented as rising out of the sea, a seven-headed beast ; and the woman is represented as sitting on this seven-headed beast, whose seven heads are said to figure seven mountains on which she sitteth, and seven kings which serve her. Now, in all these places we are to take seven not as a precise number, (unless perhaps in the case of the seven mountains) but as a number used to signify the completeness, whether good or bad, and the power of the object to which it is applied.

Such being the interpretation of this emblem, and Christ being *the* great Teacher, teaching mankind through instruments which he is pleased to use, it will be well to connect this emblem of the ministry with the title which our blessed Lord gives himself in the sixteenth verse of the last chapter of this book, saying, “I am the bright and morning star.” The original here is very emphatic, and it might be rendered, “I am *that* bright, *that* morning star;” that is, I am that light foretold from the beginning, which should rise to dispel the gross darkness of man ; I am pre-eminently the star of original light, other stars only shining as they reflect my light. We have before observed how beautiful, expressive, and numerous are the emblems used in the Scripture to teach us of God. All nature is made therein parabolic to us, for the Spirit employs all the works of Deity which surround us in order to illustrate, and bring down to the measure

of our capacity, the things of the invisible and incomprehensible One. For example, Jeremiah teaches us, that the small grains of sand repelling the raging ocean waves, inform us of the infinite power of Him, and of the reverence which is his due, who by such weak means restrains so powerful an element.* So also in the book of Job, when God is pleased to instruct his servant, he teaches him, and by him us, that the monsters which riot in the deep, the beasts which roam through the forests, the birds of varied plumage which animate the air, as well as those animals which man makes to do him service—all and each may read us lessons in divinity. Our Saviour, too, in his teaching when on earth, has shown us that the flowers of the field may instruct us as to God's careful providence over his people; and that his knowledge of, and provision for meaner beings, may teach us, with unanxious minds, to depend upon his goodness. The inspired Psalmist also tells us to look upward, for that “the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy-work.” The sun in his strength, the rainbow making glorious the cloud, the moon in her brightness, and the various-gloried stars without number which sparkle upon the diadem of night, all speak of God, and are consecrated to religion,—“day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.” Thus the

* Jer. v. 22.

Christian contemplates Nature with a new and nobler view than the mere worldly-minded. He beholds in all things his Father's hand, and from all things derives lessons as to his goodness, love, and power. He finds all things charged to convey heavenly messages to

“The heart
Of all-beholding Man, earth's thoughtful lord.”

Of these numerous emblems, our blessed Lord here employs one, comparing himself to “the bright and morning star;” that star which tells of the hours of darkness passing, of light commencing, and to shine onward to the brightness of full day.

Under this, or a very similar figure, Jesus, and his word and ministry, by which he is revealed, are very frequently represented in Scripture. Balaam prophesying of the Saviour's advent, uses this emblem, saying, “There shall come a star out of Jacob.”* David speaks thus of the same great event: “He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds.”† Isaiah predicts his coming, declaring that he should be “a great light” to those that walked in darkness and the shadow of death.‡ And the last prophet of the Old Testament, announcing this glad event, speaks of the Messiah's advent as “the Sun of righteousness,” who should “arise with healing in his wings.”§ As

* Numb. xxiv. 17.

† 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

‡ Isa. ix. 2.

§ Mal. iv. 2.

the Old Testament concludes foretelling, so the New opens by announcing the rising of this glorious light. Jesus is declared to be "the day-spring from on high who hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace."* As of old Christ was predicted of as the "star of Jacob;" so when Jesus was born, a new star appeared to guide the Eastern sages to worship at the infant Saviour's feet, and the aged Simeon saluted him as "the light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel." The evangelist, also, to whom here our Lord declared himself by this emblem, frequently brings Jesus before us as "the light of men," and "the true light," and records Jesus entitling himself, "The light of the world," and declaring that whoso followeth him "shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."†

Thus the Old concludes predicting what the New Testament opens by declaring to be accomplished, that one should come to be the light of mankind. Jesus as the day-star has arisen, and from his humble manger in the distant East he has shone brighter and clearer, even to the ends of the earth, and still is to shine onward to "the perfect day," until all shall know him from the least unto the greatest, the earth being "filled with the knowledge of the Lord

* Luke i. 78, 79.

† John viii. 12.

as the waters cover the sea." Under this emblem he appears therefore as our great enlightener or teacher. When "darkness covered the earth, and gross darkness the peoples," and the whole Gentile race lay enveloped in the clouds of idolatry, Jesus arose to dispel this darkness. Amidst the clouds of types and ceremonies of the Mosaic ritual, the eye of faith discerned his beams; but it is under the Gospel dispensation that "life and immortality are brought to light." Thus, when the god of this world had blinded the eyes of men lest the light of the knowledge of the glory of God should be known by them, that God who commanded the light of nature to shine into the darkness, hath given us spiritual light, in the person and teaching of Jesus Christ.

Not only does Jesus thus take, as descriptive of him in the highest sense, the figure here used for the ministry of his church, but he is also called by the same name which he gives to those emblemed by these seven stars: he calls them "the angels of the churches," that is, the messengers to those churches; and to Christ is given a similar title, as, for example, when he is styled our Prophet; or as when by Malachi he is predicted of as "the messenger," or angel, "of the covenant," (chap. iii. 1^o;) or, as when by St. Paul he is called "the apostle of our profession."^{*} Thus, therefore, it is made evident to

* Heb. iii. 1.

us, that Jesus is the great enlightener and heaven-sent messenger to men; while it appears also that it is by deputies, ambassadors, an appointed ministry, that he now enlightens and conveys his messages to his people. In agreement with this our Lord says to his disciples, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you;"* and thus he fulfils his promise to his church, "Lo: I am with you alway, even to the end of the world."† .

But the emblem here employed not only teaches us to connect the ministry to his people with the prophetic office of our Lord, as he employs men to be his representatives and instruments in carrying out this office; it also instructs us that these minor stars are to draw their light from "that bright and morning star;" and these deputed teachers to look for ability to teach, and success in their teaching, to the Great Teacher. Their ability and success can only come from the same source whence they have their commission. Only He who sends them can enable them to teach for him as they ought to do. Hence it is that Jesus Christ here appeared to St. John having the "stars in his right hand;" and, when writing to the angel of the church of Ephesus, describes himself as "he that holdeth the seven stars in his right hand;" and again, writing to the angel of the church of Sardis, as "he that hath the

* John xx. 21.

† Matt. xxviii. 20.

seven spirits of God, and the seven stars." Holding in his hand of power the ministry, and possessed of the Holy Spirit to strengthen them, he is by these expressions represented as the careful shepherd and bishop of souls, ever amidst his church ready to give power to his instruments effectually to execute the prophetic office for him.

With all this agrees what we learn of Christ's ascension, and his consequent deputation of a ministry until his return, in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, where we read as follows, in the fourth chapter : " When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. And he gave some, apostles ; and some, prophets ; and some, evangelists ; and some, pastors and teachers ; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ : till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the *knowledge of the Son of God*, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (verses 8, 11—13.) Thus also the apostle, considering the grandeur and solemnity of the ministerial commission, feelingly asks, " Who is sufficient for these things ?" and replies that men have no sufficiency for it in themselves, but that all their sufficiency is of God, who maketh feeble men " able ministers of the New Testament ;" for it hath pleased God that this treasure should be in " earthen vessels, that the

excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us."* Hence the Great Prophet and the Morning Star, can alone make effectual the teaching of his deputies, and cause his light to shine through them. A Paul may plant and an Apollos water, but it is only He that can give the increase; so that in very truth the planter and the waterer are nothing, but all is the work of Him who giveth this increase.†

In the emblem under consideration, then, Jesus Christ is set before us as our Great Teacher, teaching us by an appointed ministry, which ministry he regulates, governs, and makes effectual to the feeding of "the church of God." Here we may notice with thankfulness the care of Christ for his church. He has not only, as we have already seen, ordained a church to preserve and transmit the truth, but has appointed a ministry for that church; and not only so, but he is ever present in that church and with that ministry, to supply the Spirit, in order that the work of the ministry may be effectually performed. He is the true golden pipe through which the golden oil is supplied, in order that the light may shine in the candlestick.‡ For the seven candlesticks there are seven stars; and he who holds these seven stars in his right hand, has also the seven spirits of God,§

* 2 Cor. ii. 16; iii. 5, 6, and iv. 7. † 1 Cor. iii. 5—7.

. ‡ Zech. iv. 2 and 12. § Rev. iii. 1.

and walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, to supply light to those stars to give light to those candlesticks.* In the midst of his church, possessed of the fulness of the Spirit, Jesus walks, to furnish to the ministry he has appointed the Spirit whereby they may teach for him, "holding forth the word of truth."

But again, we may learn from the emblem we are considering, the deep and solemn attention which we should give to the preaching of the Gospel, hearkening to it as a message from Christ Jesus, sent, indeed, through a mere man, but nevertheless a Divine message. Preaching is an ordinance of God, and it is the method by which he is pleased to save those who believe. "Faith cometh by hearing." The ministry is therefore to be esteemed "very highly, in love, for the work's sake," and to be received, considering who has sent them, and for whom they speak. When they speak as "the oracles of God," and as "ambassadors for Christ," let us hearken accordingly; thus we shall be instructed and edified in the faith.

But further, we may hence plainly learn the necessity of Jesus giving his blessing, and working by his instruments, so that the ministration of his word may be effectual. Office, however high—even though apostolic—will not be able, by itself, either to convert or to edify. Office is but the sacrifice, the Spirit

must give the fire. The Lord must open our hearts to attend to the truth when spoken, and he must open the lips of the teacher that he may teach the truth. Hence, therefore, the necessity of earnest prayer on the part of hearers of the Word, is evident. If we thus draw near to hear the word of God, he will doubtless bless us, and make us wise unto salvation. The Spirit of Jesus — “that bright and morning star”—will cause the “day to dawn, and the day-star to arise upon our hearts.” But if we are not profited in hearing, it must be because we neglect to ask for the Great Teacher’s spirit, who alone can open our understandings. He “who commandeth the light to shine out of darkness,” can alone “shine into our hearts,” to give us there “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.” He is amidst his church to hear and answer such prayers; but it is because they are cold and few, or none, that the word of God is so unfruitful.

Here we may profitably inquire, Has Jesus, through the ministration of the word, shone into our hearts? Can it be said of us, “Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord?” But this enlightening of the soul is not only the communication of the knowledge of God, but also of the love of God. It purifies while it teaches. The way, therefore, to ascertain whether he has given us the light of knowledge, is to examine whether he has given us

the light of holiness. If he has purified our hearts to love the "beauty of his holiness," he has first taught our minds to know him. Reader! is it so with you? Do you "approve the things that are more excellent?" Are you loving the light, and endeavouring to "walk as children of the light"—"honestly, as in the day?" There can be no true knowledge of God without an earnest desire to love him, and to be conformed to his character, even as there can be none of the latter feelings without that Divine knowledge. He into whose soul Jesus ~~as~~ shone as the light of life, must walk on earth even as Jesus walked. Jesus was the light of men, and his people must endeavour to reflect his light. Hence St. Paul exhorts Christians, saying, "Shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." * "Let us," the same apostle elsewhere says, "put off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof." † Thus if Christ has, as the day-star, enlightened our minds, we shall also follow him in the light of good living and holiness: he will be, as it were, the star, guided by which we shall steer our course over the dangerous

* Phil. ii. 15, 16.

† Rom. xiii. 12—14. • •

sea of this world, as of old, star-led, the mariner guided his path through the waves. By faith seeing, and “ever looking unto Jesus,” we shall “run with patience the race set before us.”

While the Christian must, in general, thus shine as his Master did amongst men, so especially he must endeavour to convey light to his fellow-men. He must “let his light so shine before men, that they may see his good works,” and thus give glory to God; for Christians are “the lights of the world.” Every one may do something in this respect—something towards the noble object of dispersing the gross and fatal darkness which sin has brought over the minds and hearts of men. By word and by deed, by contributions and by prayers, we may assist to diffuse the light of truth and holiness. It is promised that “they which be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever.”* True wisdom is to know, to love, and serve the Lord; and let it be our endeavour to bring others also to know, and love, and serve him; and thus shining here for Christ to men, we shall shine with him in eternal day in the world to come.

If thus enlightened by Jesus Christ, we shine by and for him, as the moon does by and for the sun, then let us remember that we must seek continually

* Dan. xii. 3.

for closer communion with him, so that we may draw more light from him. Anything which comes between him and us must obscure our light, as the earth eclipses the moon. The complete light of knowledge and love of God is reserved for a future state, when Jesus promises to give to those who are faithful to the end, "the morning star;" * that is, he will give them himself, in the full knowledge and love of him, for ever. Having here below revealed himself in their souls as he is not revealed unto the world, he shall hereafter more entirely and for ever take up his abode within them. Now, Jesus is our star, instructing and enlightening us by inferior stars; but in a future state he will be our immediate, infallible, and eternal teacher and light. In the midst of his glorified church he shall be present to clear all doubts, to remove all difficulties, and to explain all events; so that throughout eternity, with an intellect enlarged to comprehend God and his works, and a heart purified to love his holiness, the redeemed from amongst men shall ever be advancing to nobler and higher attainments, Jesus being their guide, their instructor, and light. Thus we read that the heavenly city shall have "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God shall enlighten it, and the Lamb shall be the light thereof." †

* Rev. ii. 28.

† Ib. xxi. 23.

Let us then desire the coming of that glorious time when “the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the **LORD**, as the waters cover the sea.”* Then darkness shall have no longer place in our souls or on earth, but all shall be true knowledge and pure holiness. As natural light is pleasant to the natural eye, so to the spiritual eye the rising of the Sun of Righteousness upon benighted minds and upon the dark places of the earth, is an object of delight. Every event which appears to mark the nearer approach of this bright sun rising upon our world, should be welcome to the believer, as is the gray of dawn to the weary watcher of the night. He should be “looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God,” even “more than they which watch for the morning.”

But, while through light on earth the Christian walks onward towards the realms of endless day, the position of the wicked is the very reverse. Here they love darkness rather than light; and they are called the children of “the ruler of the darkness of this world;” and their end is, “the blackness of darkness for ever.” Here they have chosen darkness, and at last they shall be “cast into outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.” Their condemnation shall be that Christ, “that bright and morning star,” “has come into the

* Hab. ii. 14.

world," but they have turned from and hated his brightness. Let us, reader, look carefully then to the path we tread. If it be the path of darkness, it can never lead to the land of light; but though it may seem pleasant now, it must inevitably terminate in eternal death. While we have time, therefore, let us look to the light, turn to and be guided by it. Let us value the means of grace; seek that by them we may be so guided as that we may find, and ever go along the straight and narrow road which leadeth unto the light of eternal life.

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR PROPHET.

THE POWER OF HIS WORD.

"And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword."—Verse 16.

Not only does Christ now give effect to the prophetic office with which he is invested by means of a human ministry, of which the emblem was “seven stars,” but also by the power of his word, which is represented as “a sharp two-edged sword” proceeding “out of his mouth.” Indeed, so much does the written word of God testify of Jesus, and act as the fulfilment of his prophetic office, that we find the title, “The Word of God,” given both to Christ personally, and to the Holy Scripture; and that because it contains what He, as the Word, or utterance of God, to man, has seen right to teach us.

But that this sharp two-edged sword, seen by the apostle as proceeding out of the mouth of the Son of man, is the emblem of his word, by which now he acts as our Prophet, is very plain. It is represented as

proceeding out of his mouth, to show us that it signifies what Christ speaks to us. Thus, also, in the nineteenth chapter of this book, Jesus is declared to be entitled, "The Word of God;" and then it is added, "out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword." (verses 13, 15.) St. Paul, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, uses this figure, saying, "The word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a dis- cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."* Again, in describing the Christian's armour the apostle uses the same figure, and explains it when he points out the offensive weapon of the spiritual warrior, saying, "Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."† Our blessed Lord, speaking through the prophet Isaiah, employs also this same emblem of the prophetic power of his word: having called on all the world to hearken to his voice, he adds, "God hath made my mouth like a sharp sword."‡ Hence, also, speaking by another prophet of his messages and warnings to Israel, God says: "I have hewed them by the prophets, and slain them by the words of my mouth."§

It is evident, then, that the emblem now before us figures the word or teaching of Jesus, and its power;

* Heb. iv. 12.

† Eph. vi. 17.

‡ Isa. xlix. 1, 2.

§ Hos. vi. 5.

and, therefore, that it is a mark which distinguishes him as our Prophet teaching us Divine truth.

We have already noticed the power of his voice as King, which is heard everywhere, and obeyed where it is heard; here we have represented the gracious power of his word as our Prophet, by means of which it reaches to and converts the soul. The power of God's word has in all ages shown the suitability of the figure here employed. By it Christ has gone forth conquering and to conquer. It has won its way throughout the earth from east to west, and that not by force of arms or worldly policy, but even in spite of these, and only by virtue of its own Divine energy as a spiritual sword. And as in its general spread throughout the earth, so, also, in the case of individual conversion, its power has been, and is displayed. It cuts into the very heart, "piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; and is a dis-
cerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." It, by convincing of sin, as it were, slays the sinner. This its killing power St. Paul speaks of, saying, "When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment which was ordained unto life, I found to be unto death. For sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it slew me."* This is the first, and indeed painful effect of the word of God, when it is brought to the

* Rom. vii. 9—11.

heart. It is as a sword executing judgment upon us. But it wounds in order to heal, and therefore it at the same time speaks with power to revive the soul, by announcing health, and pardon, and life in Jesus Christ. It is, further, like a sword cutting deep, inasmuch as it enters into the very recesses of men's hearts and spirits, so that each one finds in it something that strikes home to himself, as though especially addressed to him, and only to him.

Here it will be useful that we inquire whether the word of God has come with this its power to our hearts? Has it convinced us of sin, and thus made us to feel as dead before God, deserving only eternal death? Has it cut into our spirits, and taught us to "crucify the flesh with its passions and lusts?"

Moreover, this emblem should teach us the value we should set upon the Scriptures as being the sword of the Spirit, and proceeding out of the mouth of Jesus. In them he speaks to us, and carries on his office as our prophet. The Scriptures, therefore, should be as much prized, and listened to as attentively by us, as Jesus Christ himself would be, if he were visibly before us and audibly addressing us. It is the great and unerring instrument whereby Christ acts as our teacher, now that he is ascended up on high; and the stars, or angels of the churches, must teach in accordance with it. But yet powerful and valuable as is the written word, we must ever remem-

ber that it will be a dead letter to us without the Holy Spirit give it a living energy in our souls. It is "the sword of the Spirit;" that is, the instrument by which the Spirit acts; yet only an instrument, and therefore of no power, unless used by the Spirit. He must open our hearts to attend to the word, or it will reach our ear in vain. Jesus walked and talked with his disciples, but they knew him not; nor could they understand the prophets until he "opened their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures." And even so we shall hear him in his word speaking, and yet not know or understand, unless he, by his Spirit, opens our understandings, and reveals himself unto us. Let us, then, in all hearing and reading of the word, pray with David: "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law."* Thus shall we obey the precept, and obtain the promise, "Call upon me, and I will answer thee, and show thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not."†

But the emblem before us not only marks Christ to be the Word of God, and as fulfilling his office of prophet by the written word, but also as he who shall as a king execute judgment, and carry into effect all that God has pronounced against his enemies. We have already more than once observed the close union and inseparable connexion between the triple offices

* Psa. cxix. 18.

† Jer. xxxiii. 3.

of our Saviour; so that whatever distinguishes him as possessed of any one of them, does in some measure mark him as endowed with the others. Thus this emblem, while it especially marks him as our prophet, does also at the same time display him as our king, and denotes the royalty of his prophetic office,—that he is a prophet upon his throne, and thus can give effect to the events which he predicts, and accomplish that which he promises. That the kingly power of judgment is implied in the figure under consideration, will appear by referring to the use of it elsewhere. If, in the first place, we turn to our Lord's epistle to the church of Pergamos, which is contained in the second chapter of the Revelation, we find in the twelfth verse that, in addressing the angel of that church, he entitles himself, "He which hath the sharp sword with two edges." Let us, then, look into the epistle to this church of Pergamos, so that we may endeavour to trace the meaning of the emblem which our Lord takes as his title in addressing it. Now we find in this epistle that, after commending that church, because it held fast his name, and had not denied the faith even in time of persecution, Jesus proceeds to say that he had "a few things against" it; and having stated them, he warns them in the sixteenth verse, saying, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will *fight against thee with the sword of my mouth.*" In a similar manner,

also, this emblem is explained in the passage to which we have already referred in the nineteenth chapter. Jesus having been there styled "the Word of God," it is added, in the fifteenth verse, that "*out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations*: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God." And again, in the twenty-first verse, it is said, that the remnant of God's enemies "*were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth*." In a similar manner, also, is Jesus predicted of as executing judgment by his word in the eleventh chapter of the prophecy of Isaiah, when it is said of him in the fourth verse, that "*he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth*, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked." Thus, also, St. Paul foretels the destruction of the wicked one by the power of Christ's word, saying, that "*the Lord shall consume him with the spirit of his mouth*, and shall destroy him with the brightness of his coming."*

From each and all of these passages, it is evident that this emblem of a sharp two-edged sword going out of the mouth of the Son of man, represents the execution of judgment upon his enemies, according to his word, and accomplished by and at his command,

* 2 Thess. ii. 8.

for his word is omnipotent. As he said, " Let there be light, and there was light," even so effectually and speedily shall his word of judgment be carried into execution ; and therefore this his word is figured by the sword wherewith sentence of vengeance is effected. But this point belongs rather to his Kinghood, and we have dwelt upon it under that head.

This power may suggest to us a solemn subject for self-examination. We must either now hear the word of Jesus as our prophet teaching us, or hereafter as our king condemning. Either now as a spiritual sword it must wound and pierce us, in order to arouse and heal us; or hereafter as a sword of vengeance, it must fall on us to our destruction. If we refuse Christ as our prophet, yet we cannot shun him as our king. Are we listening to him as our prophet? Has his word reached our hearts and souls? We read, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that the multitude which heard Peter preach his first sermon, " were pricked in their heart," and anxiously inquired what they should do in order to be saved. Now here we perceive the word of Christ as the prophet of the church, acting as a sword on them, by piercing their hearts and consciences, and thereby being aroused, they fled for " refuge to the hope set before them," and were, therefore, delivered for the word of Christ as king descending upon them in judgment. Reader, has

Christ's sword thus pierced you? Has it, as a voice from heaven, warned you of your sinful state and your condemnation, and called you to repentance? If not, then the sword of eternal justice still hangs over you; and unless you repent, it shall surely fall upon you. How soon it may to each, or to mankind at large, cease to be a sword of mercy, and begin to execute judgment, none can tell. We only know that "to-day, while it is called to-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts." "See, then, that ye refuse not him that speaketh," but pray that the Holy Spirit may accompany the word of Christ with saving power to your hearts, that thus you may "flee from the wrath to come."

There is another practical use we may make of this emblem. We see by it that the word of God is the sword with which Christ fights against his enemies, is now subduing them, and shall at the last destroy them. Even when he was on earth fulfilling the conditions of a man, and had to fight with man's great adversary, the devil, this was the sole weapon of his warfare. Of our Saviour's most set contest with our great enemy we have accounts in the gospels, when they record the forty days' sojourn and the temptations in the wilderness. Now, there we learn that, in answer to each temptation of the devil, our Lord's reply was, "It is written:" with this, the written word, he fought and conquered. Thus the

word of God was the two-edged sword of the Spirit, whereby the glorious Captain of our salvation put to flight our adversary. Herein Christ is our example. We have to meet the same enemy, and our sword is the same; and if we faithfully use it, we shall have the same result. With this weapon we shall cause Satan to flee, and "come off more than conquerors through him that has loved us." It is certain that if we are followers of Christ Jesus, the same enemy will lie in our path; for we are taught the solemn truth, that "we wrestle not only against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against wicked spirits (*margin*) in high places;" and, therefore, in addition to all other parts of Christian armour, we must "take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

And not only is this the Christian's sole, but most sufficient weapon wherewith to defeat Satan, it is also his only legitimate, and equally sufficient weapon wherewith to combat error and to spread the truth. "The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, yet mighty through God" to destroying error, and dispersing moral darkness, and diffusing the light of the gospel. To it alone let us ever have recourse, both to enlighten ourselves and to give light to others; to establish the truth and to overturn falsehood.

* Eph. vi. 12—17.

CHRIST IN GLORY OUR PROPHET.

THE LIGHT OF HIS WORD.

"And his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength."

Verse 16.

IN considering the emblem of Christ's guidance of the ministry, whereby he is said to have "in his right hand seven stars," we took occasion to observe that, he is the source of all light himself, and consequently that he is pre-eminently the star,—"that bright and morning star." Considering him as such, we have anticipated much that might also refer to the emblem which now claims our more particular attention.

When St. John records that the countenance of the Son of man appeared to him like the sun shining in his strength, we take it, in the first place, to be a third indication of his prophethood. Darkness is the emblem of ignorance, and light of knowledge.

Spiritual ignorance is the condition of man by nature; through the revelation of Jesus Christ we become possessors of divine wisdom. Jesus Christ therefore, as our teacher, may well be compared to the light of the natural sun, which dispels the darkness of nature. And in accordance with this emblem we read, that when Jesus Christ appeared again to St. John to give to him the "little open book," after the receiving of which the apostle was to prophesy "before many peoples, and nations, and tongues, and kings," it is said, "his face was as it were the sun."* Here it is evident that Christ appears as the revealer of God's will through St. John as the human instrument; and this his office is figured by the emblem used, when it is said, "his face was as it were the sun." Very many examples might be quoted, both from the Old and New Testament, in which darkness is the emblem of ignorance, and the sun and light the figures used for knowledge, and especially for the knowledge communicated to men by Jesus Christ; who is also, because of his office of teacher or prophet, frequently called the light itself, or the sun. The prophet Malachi, as we have already seen, predicts his coming under this last title, calling him "the Sun of righteousness." Zechariah, the father of the Baptist, entitles him, "the day spring from on high, that hath visited us to give light to them that sit in darkness, and in the

* Chap. x. i.

shadow of death." In similar language the prophet Isaiah announces his birth, saying, "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."* Not to quote other of the many examples of this mode of speaking before Christ's coming, let us refer to his own declaration recorded by St. John in his gospel, when he calls himself "the light of the world;" and states, that he is "come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on him should not abide in darkness."† St. Paul also employs this figure, drawing from it a practical lesson saying, "Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:"‡ and again he declares, that Jesus Christ "hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel."§ St. Peter instructs us to "show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light."|| St. John, in various passages of his first epistle, frequently employs light and darkness for knowledge and ignorance, and also gives the title of light to God, or to Christ as the revealer of God. Thus, for example, he declares, "This is the message we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

* Isa. ix. 2. † John viii. 12, and xii. 46, &c.

‡ Eph. v. 8. § 2 Tim. i. 10. || 1 Pet. ii. 9. .

If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another;" and he exhorts us to live as followers of Christ, "because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth."*

This emblem, thus frequently employed in Scripture, is most natural and forcible; so that we can, in fact, hardly better express our ideas as to ignorance and the dispersion of it by knowledge, than by the figure of darkness chased by light. It is especially employed in Scripture to represent spiritual ignorance, and the dispersion of it effected by the light of revelation. Hence no figure can more aptly express Christ's prophetical office than when it is said, "his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." The light of life which he dispenses is clear and bright and powerful as the unclouded and noon-day sun. The world lay in the darkness of spiritual ignorance and in the shadow of death, until Christ as the great teacher, revealing God and eternity, arose to roll away the clouds of error, superstition and doubt, and poured the light of heaven upon the earth. "The unknown God" whom men in ignorance worshipped, or "felt after," he declared—the certainty of a future state of rewards and punishments concerning which men speculated, or dreamt, or

* 1 John. i. 5—7, and ii. 8.

denied, he has demonstrated—the way of peace with God, of which men did not know and could not discover any thing, he has distinctly taught—and upon all the darkness, groping, and distress of the human mind as regards spiritual things, and a future and eternal state, he has arisen, even as the bright and gladsome sunshine breaks upon the weary, wandering, night-bewildered traveller of the pathless desert.

Seeing then that Jesus has become such a light to us, we may hence learn in the first place, that if we go astray we shall not have the excuse of ignorance which may shelter the heathen. To us, in such case, the words of our blessed Saviour, with a slight alteration, may be applied, “If ye were blind, ye should have no sin ; but now ye see ; therefore your sin remaineth.”* “This is the condemnation” of those possessed as we are of the revelation of Jesus Christ, “that light has come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”† Let us beware, therefore, of abusing our privileges. “While we have the light let us believe in the light, that we may be the children of light.” If any do not know God in a Christian land like ours, it is because they *will* not know him. The light shines brightly around them, but they shut their eyes,—“they *will* not see;” and if such fall

* John ix. 41.

† Ib. iii. 19.

into the ditch and are destroyed, surely their blood must be upon their own heads: The aggravation of the guilt and condemnation of such shall be, that they knew their Master's will yet did it not, and therefore they shall be beaten with many stripes.*

Further, we may hence, also, learn the holiness of the doctrines of the gospel. Light and darkness are as frequently used in Scripture as figures of holiness and wickedness as they are of knowledge and ignorance. Thus the light which shines from Christ our great prophet, is no less the light of holiness dispelling deeds of darkness, than it is the light of truth dispersing the darkness of error. Hence he who, enlightened by the light of truth from Jesus Christ, ceases to be spiritually ignorant, by the same light also ceases to love and live in sin. And this holiness which characterizes the light of "the truth as it is in Jesus," is indeed the reason why so many shut their eyes to it, and reject it. They love sin, which they know that light condemns, and therefore they will not see it. This is shown us by our blessed Saviour in a passage just now quoted from the third chapter of the gospel of St. John, and the words which follow it, when he says, "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

* Luke xii. 47, 48.

But he that *doeth truth* cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (verses 19 — 21.) Here is distinctly marked the inseparable connexion between the light of truth and the light of holiness, and that the real cause of the rejection of the former is the dislike of the latter: for this is the grand secret of unbelief and infidelity; holiness is disliked, and therefore truth is neglected, or boldly denied. The Psalmist also connects in a striking manner the knowledge of God and the practice of godliness, saying, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O **LORD**, in the light of thy countenance."* Here knowing the gospel is declared to result in walking in the paths of righteousness; for it is only in those paths that the sense of Divine favour is felt and enjoyed: in other words, that he makes his face to shine upon, and is gracious unto us; that he lifts up his countenance upon us and gives us peace.† Let our earnest prayer to God be, "Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us,"‡—cause us to love thy holiness, and to love thy truth; make us to "love that which thou dost command," that so we may learn thy truth. Let holiness be our desire, so that we may know the doctrine which is of God.§

* Psa. lxxxix. 15.

† Numb. vi. 25, 26.

‡ Psa. iv. 6.

§ John vii. 17.

• We may still further learn from this figure the practical truth that, if we know the truth and love it, we must be studious also to live it. We are to “walk in the light, as he is in the light:”* “ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord : walk as children of light and have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”† So, also, when St. Paul commends the Thessalonians, he calls them the children of light, and children of the day ; not of the night, nor of darkness ; and thereupon exhorts them, “Therefore let us not sleep, as do others ; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night ; and they that are drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love ; and, for an helmet, the hope of salvation.”‡ Thus also our Lord commands his disciples to let their “light to shine before men, that they may see their good works;”§ and glorify God. As Christ is the light both of knowledge and holiness, so those whom he has enlightened must reflect, as mirrors, his light to their fellow men, being “lights in the world, holding forth,” by their lives and conversations, “the word of life.” As we must be clothed with the robe, be girt with the girdle, put on the mitre, stand

* 1 John i. 7.

† Eph. v. 8, 11. ‡ 1 Thess. v. 5—8.

§ Matt. v. 16.

with the footing, and draw the sword of Jesus, so, also, must we endeavour to shine with his light.

But we may, moreover, consider the emblem before us as indicative of the glorified condition of Christ's human nature. This glorious One whose "countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength," was he who erewhile stood at the bar of Pilate, "his visage marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men,"—without "comeliness" or desirable beauty, but "despised and rejected of men; the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." But now, how changed! how glorified! His appearance bright and majestic as the noon tide sun—"dark with excess of light." He was even during his humiliation "the brightness of the Father's glory," veiled indeed beneath a suffering form of clay, but putting forth occasionally glimpses of his original splendour. Thus, when he would show to his chosen apostles on the holy mount a representation of the Son of man in his coming kingdom, he was, we read in the seventeenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, "transfigured before them, and his face did shine as the sun." Ascended now to the right hand of God, he is for ever invested with such majesty and glory. Thus, when he appeared to Saul on his journey to Damascus, it was with a light above the brightness of the sun at midday.* Such, too, is the splendour

* Acts xxvi. 13.

with which he appeared to the beloved disciple, both on the occasion mentioned in the passage before us, and on that recorded in the first verse of the tenth chapter of this book. With this same majestic presence he shall also come when he shall return to earth in glory, to take to himself his great power and reign, and to make “the kingdoms of the world, the kingdoms of our God, and of his Christ.”

Here, therefore, we behold a figure representing to us our nature taken up by Christ, and, through virtue of this union, exalted to the highest glory and majesty. To partake of this exaltation is the calling and hope of the Church. “Our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.”* At his second coming, the dead in Christ shall rise first; and this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality; we shall be changed into the same image of the Lord, from glory to glory, and, awaking up after his likeness, we shall be satisfied with it, and reign with him in glory for ever. “Then,” our blessed Lord has taught us, “the righteous,” like their great head and forerunner, “shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom

* Phil. iii. 20, 21.

of their Father."* By such figure Daniel also expresses the glory of the resurrection state of the righteous, saying, "And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever."† Thus shall the "blessed and holy" partakers of the "first resurrection" become participants of Immanuel's brightness, crowned with unfading glory, enlightened with eternal wisdom, and made radiant with perfect holiness.

This is the glorious hope set before us, but let us beware of falling short of it. Let us ever be mindful of our high calling, and endeavour to walk worthy of it. To arrive at last at that happy city which the glory of God enlightens, and of which the Lamb is the light,‡ we must now have taken Jesus as our light, and as such follow him. That the light of his countenance may shine on us for ever, and that we may throughout eternity reflect his glorious brightness, we must first here on earth, know the joyful sound, walk in the light of his word, and in measure be conformed to his character. Let us then enquire of ourselves, has Jesus Christ become our prophet, giving us the light of truth, to know him and the Father and the Holy Spirit, in and by him? And has that light of truth also proved to us a light of holiness, guiding us in the straight and

* Matt. xiii. 43.

† Dan. xii. 3.

‡ Rev. xxi. 23.

narrow way of life? Are we now reflecting in some degree this light to our fellow men, endeavouring thereby to "show forth the praises of him who hath called us out of darkness into his marvellous light?"

If it is not so with us, we are not, as yet at least, partakers of the hope of glory; nor can we look to inherit that purified and perfected body, made like unto Christ's glorified body, which is promised to the people of God.

Besides the bright hope to allure us to God on the one hand, there is, on the other, the blackness of darkness and despair to warn us to flee to him. If Jesus is the source of light, and all present and prospective blessings, rejection of him and banishment from his presence must be productive of present loss, and eternal sorrow. As knowing the light, loving it, and following it, is the course which leads to the brightness of endless day, so loving darkness, and doing the works of the prince of darkness, is the path which terminates in everlasting night. The awful sentence which the Prince of light shall pronounce upon these servants of darkness is thus expressed by his own lips: "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth:"*—For such is reserved the "blackness of darkness for ever."†

May we have grace given to us, now and continually,

* Matt. xxv. 30.

† Jude 13.

to seek the light and walk in it—to “look unto Jesus” as our sun, and in “his light to see light”—so that following him we may reach the land of endless day! May our path be that of the just, which is as “the shining light, shining more and more unto the perfect day !”*

* Prov. iv. 18.

CHRIST IN GLORY.

THE EFFECT OF THE VISION.

"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead."—Verse 17.

WE now proceed from the description of our Lord's appearance, to notice, first, the effect of this vision upon St. John; and second, the manner in which he was comforted. Hitherto we have endeavoured to ascertain the meaning of the emblems by which our Lord's appearance is described, and the practical truths we may thereby learn. We have seen that the seven golden candlesticks, which were beheld by the apostle, while one like unto the Son of man walked in the midst of them, represented the church of God on earth, in its diverse unity, having for its duty to hold forth and display the light of truth in the world; while the presence of the Son of man amidst them, teaches us that he is ever with his church and people, to defend, guide, and govern.

them. Beheld thus by the beloved disciple, standing and walking amidst his church, his robes are noted for our learning, pointing him out as our great high priest, who hath made atonement, and still "maketh intercession in the presence of God for us;" while also we may gather from them that we are to be partakers not only of his righteousness by imputation, but also of his holiness by impartation. In addition to these robes, the apostle observed and has recorded, as we have seen, some circumstances significant of splendour and majesty which invested the Son of man, which we have considered as indicative of his office as the king, not only of his church but of all the earth; and therefore teaching us the duty of obedience to and dependence upon him, as well as the fearful consequences of rebellion against his Almighty Majesty. And lastly, we have seen that the apostle has recorded other remarkable particulars relative to this appearance of Jesus Christ, which serve to mark him as our great prophet, who either directly, or through appointed instruments, reveals the will of God to men; and hence we have learned how necessary it is to take heed how we hear, and to beware lest we refuse Him who, invested with such power and glory, speaketh to us from heaven; for if we refuse the message of his love, we shall have to hear at last his voice in the thunder of judgment.

From the particulars of this wonderful vision we

now proceed to observe the effect of it upon the apostle. He tells us, "When I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead." We have had occasion to notice all along the remarkable similarity between the vision given to the beloved prophet Daniel, of which we have the record in the tenth chapter of his prophecy, and that here vouchsafed to the beloved disciple; and as they are similar in themselves, so also in the effect they are represented as producing upon these chosen servants of God. The prophet tells us that, beneath the splendour of the vision he beheld, he was overwhelmed; that there remained no strength in him; that his vigour was turned into weakness, and that he retained no strength; that he set his face to the ground, and became dumb; and, addressing the divine being that appeared to him, he said, "O my Lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength." (verse 8, 15, 16.)

Nor was it, indeed, peculiar to Daniel and John thus to sink beneath the brightness of celestial visions; but such we read in most instances as the effect of similar revelations on those to whom they were given. Isaiah is an example. To him was given a glorious view of the eternal Trinity, and with the like feelings he exclaims, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for

mine eyes have seen the king, the LORD of Hosts.*
In like manner we read that Gideon and the father
of Samson were alarmed at the divine visions which
they beheld;† and God declares to Moses, “ Thou
canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me
and live.”‡

Why is this? Why should the presence of the all-good Creator fill with terror, and be even fatal to the creature of his hand? Surely it was not always so. Some great and fearful event must have come to pass to put such a distance and enmity between God and man. It were quite inconsistent to suppose that thus it was from the first, or according to the divine purpose at creation. Turning to the revelation from heaven, there we find the difficulty explained. It was not always thus. God made man holy and happy, and capable of intercourse with himself, and even finding his highest enjoyment in communion with his Maker. But a fearful act on the part of man has put a infinite separation between the Creator and his creature. “ God made man upright, but he hath sought out many inventions;” man has broken his Creator’s law, and because God is just and holy, therefore man trembles before and flees from his presence. Thus Adam fled to hide himself in the trees of the garden, and thus, naturally, all his posterity also flee from and dread the presence of God.

* Isa. vi. 5. † Judges vi. 22, and xiii. 22. ‡ Ex. xxxiii. 20.

•There are few facts which serve more strikingly to show us the fearful character of sin than this dread of God's presence which it has caused in man; so that instead of loving and desiring to walk in the sight of the all-good One, his presence is alarming, and even the thought of Him is shunned. And indeed this terror in the presence of God is just and right on the part of a sinful creature, for conscience tells us that God is not less holy than he is good; and that, therefore, he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity and cannot look upon sin. Hence even the regenerate and pardoned sinner cannot think of, or stand in the presence of God with any other feeling than alarm, unless he is beheld in "the man Christ Jesus." Awful, indeed, were the thought of meeting the holy One and the Just, were it not that between him and us there stands a "daysman," who hath made atonement for us, and in whom God is well pleased.

Now it was the knowledge of the Divine holiness and justice, and the sense of their own sinfulness, which caused these favoured servants of God to be alarmed at these visions. The more advanced the believer is, the deeper views he will have of God's exceeding holiness on the one hand, and on the other of his own exceeding sinfulness. Thus it was that St. Paul esteemed himself as "the chief of sinners;" a title which every one who knows "the plague of

his own heart," will consider as due especially to himself. And even as Daniel and John felt, so, if we know ourselves, shall we feel in the contemplation of the Divine presence, unless Jesus Christ be present to our minds. When we have read our real characters in the light of God's holiness, we too shall tremble at his presence, and feel that without the intervention of the Son of God, who is also the Son of man, there is nothing but destruction for us. And hence we find that for the most part, the first effect of becoming acquainted with divine truth, in other words of knowing God, is to fill the heart with fear and terror as we begin to discover his infinite holiness, and to be convinced of our own sins and the guilt of sin. Thus it was with Job: as he became better acquainted with God, he became more bowed down in soul, and would no more lift up his head. Hence we find him confessing to the Almighty, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eyc seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."*

Here it will be well that we should examine ourselves whether the revelation of God in his word has wrought this effect in us. Have we fallen "at his feet as dead," feeling that in his sight we are indeed dead—dead spiritually in trespasses and sins? Has the view of God, as revealed in Scripture, and of our

* Job xlvi. 5, 6.

own spiritual condition, come so home to our consciences, as that we feel and confess that, if he were to enter into judgment with us, we should be most justly condemned to where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched? If thus we are humble before God, then are we in the right spirit to receive comfort; and it is our privilege, as well as duty, to look to Jesus as our Mediator and find peace; to hearken to the gracious accents of his love, speaking peace to his people, even as here he comforts and strengthens his beloved servant.

CHRIST IN GLORY.

THE COMFORT.

“And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not ; I am the first and the last : I am he that liveth, and was dead ; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen ; and have the keys of hell and of death.”—Verses 17, 18.

THUS by deed and word Jesus assured and comforted his alarmed disciple. Very similar still continues the history of Daniel's vision: he, we read, was strengthened in a like manner. In the tenth verse of the tenth chapter of his prophecy he tells us, “Behold, a hand touched me;” and again in the sixteenth verse, “Behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips;” and again in the eighteenth and ninetieth verses, “Then therc came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee, be

strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me." And thus, also, in the cases to which we have alluded—Isaiah, Gideon, and Manoah—they were supported under the divine vision by deeds and words plainly indicative of favour and acceptance. Hence, then, it is evident that, notwithstanding the simple impossibility of man seeing God and living, some means has been provided through which we perceive "that God doth talk with man, and yet he liveth."*

It is, then, for us a most important inquiry, how we may thus stand before God and live?—what is the means provided, whereby the holy God and his sinful creatures on earth may meet, hold intercourse, be at peace and at—one-ment? Now, in the words before us, and in the parallel passage in Daniel, as well as in the other cases we have alluded to, the one and same means of peaceful communication is indicated. They alike teach us that he who said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father but by me," is this means; he being the true mercy-seat, where God meets and holds communion with men as their Father.†

As we have observed, the terror produced by the Divine presence in these several cases, let us notice

* Deut. v. 24.

† Ex. xxv. 22; and Rom. iii. 25.

from them how Christ is pointed out in each to be the means of peace and comfort.

The account of Gideon's vision is contained in the sixth chapter of Judges. In the twelfth verse we read, that "the angel of the **LORD** appeared unto him, and said unto him, **The LORD** is with thee, thou mighty man of valour." Gideon, upon this, expresses his astonishment that if the Lord was with him, Israel should yet have been given over to the oppression of the Midianites, as they then were. We read further in the fourteenth verse, "The **LORD** looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?" Here observe, that he who was at first called "the angel of the **LORD**," is now called "The **LORD**;" and that he speaks as God, saying, Go and conquer, "have not I sent thee?" *his* mission being the warrant of success. Again, in the sixteenth verse, in reply to Gideon's confession of his own weakness and insufficiency, (the best qualification for doing the work of God,) we read, "The **LORD** said unto him, Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man." Here, again, the angel is called Jehovah, and, he speaks with the language of omnipotence. After this we read that Gideon desired to present to this angel a "meat offering;" (margin of verse 18;) which act of worship he accepted by pro-

meaning to tarry till Gideon's return, and by consuming it when presented. Gideon might, indeed, in mistake, have desired to make the offering, as St. John in mistake would have worshipped the angel;* but as, in this latter case, the refusal of the offered adoration proves the angel to have been only a created being, so here the acceptance of the offering proves the divinity of this "angel of God." And this appears to have been the impression produced upon the mind of Gideon, for now he "perceived that he was an angel of the LORD," and exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord God, for because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face." (verse 22.) To this the LORD makes answer, "Peace be unto thee; fear not: thou shalt not die." Upon which Gideon erected "an altar unto the LORD, and called it Jehovah-Shalom;" (verses 23, 24;) that is, Peace of the LORD, or the LORD Peace. Now, from all this it is very evident that this angel was Jehovah, for this name is expressly given him; while his acceptance of sacrifice, and his words to Gideon, and the altar and its title, all point to him who only is the ANGEL-JEHOVAH, Jesus Christ; by whose sacrifice peace is purchased, who is the altar of peace,† the prince of peace,‡ and the publisher of peace to our fallen race.§ Thus in this case, both by deed and word, it

* Rev. xix. 10, and xxii. 9.

† Heb. xiii. 10.

‡ Isa. ix. 6.

§ Acts x. 36.

was shown that Jesus Christ is the comfort and safety of his servants before the presence of the “high and holy One.”

If, now, we turn to the circumstances related as to the vision beheld by Manoah and his wife, we shall there also perceive that by words and deeds they had assurance given them, that the being who appeared to them was Divine, and yet that, through virtue of the Redeemer, they might stand in his presence without destruction. The narrative of this event is contained in the thirteenth chapter of Judges. In the third verse we read of the heavenly messenger first appearing to the future mother of Samson, and he is there called “the Angel of the LORD.” In relating the vision to her husband, she calls this angel “a man of God,” (verse 6,) whence it would seem that this angel, like as the angels who appeared to Abraham, and Lot,* and Jacob,† was invested with “the appearance of a man.”‡ This is evident, also, from what follows, where we read that when, in answer to Manoah’s prayer, the angel appeared again to the woman, she ran to tell her husband, saying: “Behold, the man hath appeared unto me, that came unto me the other day.” And Manoah “came to the man, and said unto him, Art thou the man that spakest unto the woman? And he said, I am.”

* Gen. xviii. 2, and xix. 2, &c. † Gen. xxxii. 24.

‡ Dan. x. 16, 18.

(verses 10, 11.) But, again, we find this man called “the Angel of the **LORD**” several times in the following verses. The sixteenth verse might seem to show that this being was less than divine, but the last clause of it shows that the words of the angel are intended to correct Manoah in this, that he was about to offer a burnt-offering to this angel, while yet he thought him but a mere angel; in other words, he was about to offer an act of worship to one whom he supposed less than divine,—therefore the angel tells him to offer only unto the **LORD**; and the last words of the verse explain this to be the meaning of the angel, when it is said, “For Manoah knew not that he was an angel of the **LORD**.” The angel here, therefore, does not deny that he was divine, but rebukes the error of him who would have worshipped him, supposing him to be a creature: even as our blessed Lord when on earth did not deny that the title of “Good” was his due, but only rebuked the error of him who, supposing him to be a mere man, attributed it to him, when he said, “Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is God.”*

Manoah inquires after the angel’s name, and is answered, “Why seekest thou after my name, seeing it is secret?” or, as the margin reads it, “wonderful.” This is similar to the reply of the angel-man with whom Jacob wrestled; and whom the

* Matt. xix. 16, 17.

patriarch calls God, saying, “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved.”* The very name “Wonderful,” is also expressly recounted amongst the roll of Immanuel’s titles, as given in the ninth of Isaiah, which opens thus: “And his name shall be called Wonderful.” Manoah, we read further, prepared “a kid with a meat-offering, and offered it upon a rock unto the **LORD**: And the angel did wondrously; and Manoah and his wife looked on. For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the **LORD** ascended in the flame of the altar.” (verses 19, 20.) “Then,” it is added in the next verse, “Manoah knew that he was an angel of the **LORD**;” and he said, “We shall surely die, because we have seen God.” Here it appears that, the angel having first stated that sacrifice was to be offered only to God, and then receiving this sacrifice, and doing wondrously in the accepting of it, Manoah was convinced that he was the angel of the **LORD**, even the **ANGEL-JEHOVAH**, as he, indeed, proves by his exclamation: “We shall surely die, *because we have seen God:*” thus expressly calling this angel God, even as Jacob had before called the man of “the secret name” by the same title. But, while it is so far evident that this angel was God, and therefore “the angel of the covenant,”† the answer by which Manoah’s wife

* Gen. xxxii. 24, 29, 30.

† Mal. iii. 1.

endeavoured to remove her husband's fears, shows us how, by his act in receiving the sacrifice, the angel pointed out the means of comfort for man in God's presence, through Christ. She rebukes her husband's dread of death because of the vision, by saying: "If the **LORD** were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat-offering at our hands, neither would he have showed us all these things, nor would, as at this time, have told us such things as these." (verse 23.) The reception of the sacrifice, and the good news communicated to them, were sure pledges of God's merciful feelings towards them, and that they might banish their fears. Even so we may much more confidently argue when we look unto Jesus. His great sacrifice, and the blessed gospel he announces, "the glad tidings of great joy," are certain pledges to the trembling sinner that God willeth not his death, but that he is a God of love, most merciful towards sinners in Jesus Christ.

The next case we have noticed, in which the Divine presence caused terror and fear of destruction, is that of Isaiah. When he was given that glorious vision in which he beheld "Jehovah sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, with his train filling the temple," and heard the adoration of the Seraphim, he said, "Woe is me! for I am undone," (or, as in the margin, "I am cut off,") "for mine eyes have seen

the king, Jehovah God of Hosts."* His fears, we are told, were removed by an action expressive of the pardon of sin. This is all that appears in the narrative itself: but if we refer to another part of inspiration, in which reference is made to this vision, we shall therefrom learn that the Saviour was also here present, and that, therefore, through his mediation, Isaiah's fears were removed. We find the reference alluded to in the twelfth chapter of St. John's Gospel in the fortieth and forty-first verses, where the apostle having mentioned the unbelief of the Jews, gives as a reason of it, that a judicial blindness had fallen upon them, as foretold by Isaiah in the sixth chapter of his prophecy; and he adds, "These things said Esaias, when he saw his glory, and spake of him,"—that is, when he saw the glory of Christ, and spake of Christ. Hence, therefore, it is plain that this vision of Jehovah which the prophet saw, was a vision also of the God-man, Jesus Christ; as, indeed, it was also of the Holy Spirit (Acts xxviii. 25); and it was because of this that he was preserved and delivered from fear.

But, in the case of Daniel, which we have seen to be so very parallel in all respects to that of St. John, it is still more evident that it was through means of the same Saviour his fears, as well as those of the apostle, were removed. The appearance of the being

* Isa. vi. 1, &c.

by whom each was comforted, his action, and his words, are similar. "One like unto the Son of man," is the description of the being in each case, and in each case this being laid his hand upon his affrighted servants, and to each spake words of encouragement and comfort. Hence, considering the whole passage in Daniel in connexion with this of St. John, it will appear manifest that the one and same being by his Divine appearance alarmed, but by his gracious deed and words comforted, these two chosen servants of God.

As, in these various instances, we have seen the Son of God to be the comforter of men, and our only stay and salvation in the Divine presence, so we shall manifestly and more particularly learn him to be such, from the particular consideration of the passage before us. What was more obscurely taught in these visions of the Old Testament is, as might be expected, more clearly set before us in this vision of the New Testament.

The first particular here mentioned is the action of Christ: "He laid his right hand upon me." So it was in the case of Daniel; the Divine Being that appeared to him, it is said, laid his hand upon him three different times. This action was calculated to assure the apostle, as also the prophet, by, in the first place, proving to him that the glorious and majestic Being before him was actually partaker of flesh and blood, and therefore not a simply spiritual being, but

his very brother, a man. Thus, when on his resurrection Jesus appeared to his disciples, we read that, though he had said, "Peace be unto you," so assuring them by words, they were still "terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit," until he had afforded them tangible proof, as he does, saying, "*Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.*" And this proof by touch filled them, we are told, with the greatest joy.* Even for such purpose, in a similar manner, did Jesus act towards St. John on the occasion before us. He gave his disciple, in this case, again tangible proof of his manhood, as well as words of peace and assurance, in order to support him under the vision. This action of our Lord must have been peculiarly calculated to assure St. John; for he had himself been present when, after his resurrection, Jesus proved to his disciples the reality of his manhood in so similar a manner, by the test of touch.

But further, this action was calculated to comfort the affrighted disciple, because by it he was assured not only that this divine being was *a man*, but also *the man Christ Jesus*, who had suffered upon the cross for human redemption. "*He laid upon John his right hand.*" In his hand are the wounds of the cross, the marks of his passion. There impressed

* Luke xxiv. 36—41.

they for ever abide. "One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."* Thus we read that "Jesus, after his resurrection, showed to his disciples his hands, and feet, and side,"† and thereby assured them of his identity. And when Thomas had declared his resolution not to believe that the Lord was risen, unless he should "see in his hands the print of the nails, and put his finger into the print of the nails," Jesus shortly after gave him this very proof, showing him, and calling upon him to put his finger into the print of the nails in his hands.‡ And alluding to this mode in which our Lord was pleased to prove his humanity and identity after his resurrection, St. John observes that he had not only "heard and seen," but also with "his hands had handled the Word of life."§ Hence we perceive a peculiar fitness in Jesus comforting St. John by laying his hand upon him; for this disciple had seen it, and the wound of the nail in it, before shown and given to be touched, as proof of the identity of him who appeared like Jesus after the resurrection, being the very Jesus who had been nailed to the accursed tree.

In the action before us, therefore, Jesus' gives tangible proof to his disciple of the blessed facts that

* Zech. xiii. 6. † Luke xxiv. 39, 40; John xx. 20.

‡ John xx. 25, 27.

§ 1 John i. 1.

the eternal Son of God continues for ever to wear our human form, and that though exalted now "far above all principalities and powers and every name that is named," he yet bears in his body the marks of his sufferings for our salvation. Oh what precious truths are these! To reflect that when we pass into an unseen world, and appear before the throne of God, there shall meet and stand by us one who, though divine, is "not ashamed to call us brethren," a partaker of our flesh and blood, one who has suffered for our redemption. But that He, "with the same human heart," will stand for us, and by us, in that awful hour, we should sink in despair:

"Oh! jealous God! how could a sinner dare
 Think on that dreadful day,
But that with all thy wounds Thou wilt be there!"

Jesus Christ and him crucified, and in the same body risen, ascended, glorified, pleading and reigning, is the soul's only stay and comfort in life, "in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment."

But our Lord proceeds to assure his disciple by words of comfort. As by his action, so also we may recognize him by his language: "Fear not." There is no other being who can effectively speak these words to the soul of the sinner, and such gracious accents frequently flowed from our Saviour's lips when he was on earth. The troubled conscience calms into peace at his all-powerful word. Heaven

and earth, God and man, are reconciled in him, and all the creature's causes of fear are thus removed. He hath " slain the enmity." Hence the angels, sent to announce his birth, proclaimed, " Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord . . . Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* Foretold and announced as the reconciler of God and man, and "the Prince of peace," he came preaching peace to men. Parting with his disciples, he bequeathed them his peace, and forbade them to have troubled hearts, or to be afraid.† Revisiting them after his resurrection, he rebuked them for their fears, and again gave them the blessing of his peace. He is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He sent forth his disciples, and now his word, "preaching peace" through the blood of his cross. Having thus come to deliver us from the fear of death,‡ he opens his final revelation to his church with these words, so suitable to his person, and work, and object,—"Fear not."

Most comfortable should these words sound to us, therefore; for they show us once more that Jesus Christ is still, in all his glory, as merciful, tender and gracious, as we know him to have been during his

* Luke ii. 10—14. † John xiv. 27. ‡ Heb. ii. 14.

humiliation and sojourn on earth. We need many proofs to convince us of this fact. Exaltation frequently so alters a man that he can hardly be called the same person that he was; and he forgets in his prosperity the warmest friendships formed in his adversity, even as the Egyptian officer forgot, when restored to Pharaoh's favour, the companion of his prison sorrows, and his promise to him. Therefore, abundant proof is given in Scripture that it is not so with Christ. Exalted to the highest glory, he yet remembers those to whose low estate he condescended, and all his promises unto them. He is for ever the same, as near to our cry, as compassionate to our troubles, as ready to our help. From heaven, as from Calvary, to the penitent heart his words are still, "Fear not." He has purchased peace for us; he has authority to give it unto us; let us, therefore, with humble yet hearty joy listen to his voice, and enjoy his peace. We shall honour him best by obeying his command; and when he says "Fear not," let us, therefore, banish all our alarm, and rest on his Almighty word. Let us "hear what God the Lord will speak; for he will speak peace unto his people."^{*} It is our privilege, if humbled before his footstool, to hear his voice of love and mercy, saying, "Fear not." In his word and in all his ordinances, in all his judgments and in all his mercies, this

* Psa. lxxxv. 8.

voice of Jesus is audible to the Christian, " Fear not!"

But to give to his beloved disciple, and to the church in all ages through him, the greater peace and assurance, Jesus adds reasons which should give confidence and banish fear, saying, " I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

" I am the first and the last."—In this title Jesus declares his divinity. We have already observed that this is one of the names of God, and therefore being here taken by our Saviour, it plainly is an assertion of his Godhead. And, indeed, even were it not given directly to God, yet in itself it is evidently a title which can belong to no being that is not divine, for it is significant of eternal, and therefore independent existence, which is the attribute of Jehovah, the great I AM, alone. But not to enter more upon this point here, we observe only that the object of our blessed Lord thus asserting his divinity on this occasion was, doubtless, to assure the apostle of his power to save and comfort, and through him to give the same assurance to the whole church. Hearing him say to our alarmed consciences, " fear not;" we might naturally inquire, who is this that speaks with such authority? He answers us, it is the Lord of conscience, the greater than conscience—God himself,

to whom we have to give account. Because, therefore, it is God who bids us fear not, his words come with power to banish terror, "for we know when he justifieth us, there is not any one who can condemn us.

In these words having declared his divine power, in what follows he goes on to show how he is adapted and suited to give peace to men. And first he says, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen." Herein he declares his manhood, his sufferings, and his triumph. This divine being became man that he might die, and through death redeem his people; and having died, he has risen again, vanquishing death, and being made in consequence, even as the man, possessor and author of eternal life to all who believe on him. These words gave additional assurance to the apostle, that this Mighty One who addressed him in all his glory, was the same whom he had seen nailed upon the cross for our sins, and whose hands and feet and side he had handled, and felt marked with the nails and the spear. How sweetly and suitably, then, from his lips, sound the words, "Fear not; I am he that died for you, I now for ever live for you, and I am God; " Fear not." By his sufferings he has removed all cause of fear, having satisfied the demands of Divine justice and made reconciliation for us. For the pouring "out of his soul unto death" he has been

promised a seed, and therefore to his people with authority he can say “ Fear not.” It is the blessed knowledge that the almighty God, the Christ, has died for us, which alone can give us peace and banish fear in our access to God. In that awful day when the world shall be assembled to judgment, this will be the support of the believer, that the eternal Son who has died for him will be there—there with the same human body and human heart with which he suffered, ready to receive him and to say unto him, “ Fear not, I am he that was dead,” and am now for ever alive; “ the first and the last.” In accordance with this, we find that the redeemed in glory are represented as celebrating the praises of “ the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world,” because he had thus suffered death for them. In their new song, falling down before the Lamb they sing, “ Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth.” And again, the angels take up the song, saying, “ Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which was in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are

in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever."*

But beside the declaration that he had died, and now lived again, our Lord adds further, "Behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen." "He was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification."† "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more ; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once ; but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God."‡ By this we are assured, in the first place, of the completion of the work of Christ. He, in part of his words here recorded, declares himself to be God, and therefore able to save ; to have died, and thus to have become man to be suitable to his work ; and now, declaring that he is raised to live for ever, he announces that he has accomplished his work. The announcement of his ever living, is the same as the declaration "It is finished." Inasmuch as he has died and now for ever liveth "the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth," it is manifested that he hath "finished transgression, made an end to sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness."§

* Rev. v. 9, 10, 12, 13. † Rom. iv. 25. ‡ Ib. vi. 9, 10.

§ Dan. ix. 24.

• But further : his ever living is a source of comfort to his people, considering the object for which he liveth. His eternal existence is for the benefit of his church, for he “ ever liveth to make intercession ” for us. Now and throughout eternity he lives and reigns, and shall live and reign to procure for us the blessings he died to purchase for us. Again : his ever living is the pledge and well-spring of our eternal life. “ Because I live, ye shall live also,”* was the promise which St. John had heard from Jesus in the days of his humiliation ; and therefore when, as in the passage under consideration, he heard the declaration of the eternal existence of Jesus, he must have recalled the promise of eternal life to his people, connected with, and flowing from the Saviour’s life. Hence also Christ is called, “ our life,”† and “ the first fruits ” from the dead, in whom “ all are made alive;”‡ and hence he calls himself “ the resurrection and the life,” declaring that, whosoever liveth and believeth in him, “ shall never die.”§ It is by virtue of our union with Christ that we are made partakers of the blessing called in Scripture eternal life. We are in body and in soul incorporated into Christ, and even now, as it were, risen, and living in him.

But there is a practical lesson also which we may hence learn. Christ’s life from the dead is frequently

* John xiv. 19.

† Col. iii. 4.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 20, 22.

§ John xi. 25, 26.

brought before us as a lesson in holiness. As we are to die to sin with him dying for sin, and as we are to partake of his resurrection and eternal existence hereafter, so also are we now spiritually to rise from the death of sin to the life of righteousness. Thus the apostle having mentioned the death and resurrection of Christ, goes on to draw this lesson from it: "Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof; neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God."* The life of Christ and his resurrection power, is to be manifested in his people by their walking in newness of life, "setting their affections on things above," and having their "conversation in heaven." And this spiritual life now wrought in the soul by the Spirit of Jesus, is the pledge, as it is also the preparation, for the eternal life of soul and body, of which the believer shall be made partaker through the resurrection and eternal life of the man Christ Jesus.

To confirm still more all the blessings implied in these titles which he has taken, Jesus adds the word,

* Rom. vi. 11—13.

“Amen.” Writing to the angel of the church of Laodicea he takes this word as one of his names, and at the same time shows its signification when thus used, saying: “Unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; these things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness.”* It signifies, therefore, the faithfulness of Christ; that all that is promised or taught by him is true, and certain to have effect. Faithful and true is, indeed, the very meaning of the word, and hence it is the affirmation which our Lord so often used when upon earth, and which we have rendered in our version, “verily, verily.” This word must also, therefore, have reminded John that the glorious being here appearing to him, was the same who on earth so often used this term expressive of truth and certainty. As the Amen he teaches truth, and as the Amen he fulfils his promises. “How many soever be the promises of God, in him is the yea, and in him the Amen”†—in other words, whatever God has promised, he will assuredly fulfil in Christ. The Amen, therefore, here added by our Lord is the seal of certainty to the blessings implied in his other words and in his action; added, like the oath to conform ~~to~~ the immutability of his counsel,” in order that “we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us.”‡

* Rev. iii. 14. † 2 Cor. i. 20. ‡ Heb. vi. 17, 18.

Lastly, our Saviour declares himself to be the possessor of "the keys of hell and of death." This expression evidently conveys the idea of sovereign authority over hell and death; for such power is implied in possessing the keys of them, as, for example, we learn in the seventh verse of the third chapter of this book, where Jesus describes himself as "he that hath the key of David," and then explains the power hereby intended, saying, "He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;" and again in the next verse, "Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." The authority which is asserted in the words before us, is ascribed by the Psalmist to our Saviour when he says, "He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death."^{*} The same absolute power is claimed by our Lord in the promise which he gives to the church, saying, "Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."[†]

But in order that we may perceive the full meaning of this promise, and of the authority which Christ declares to be his when he denominates himself the possessor of the keys of death and hell, we must consider what these two things are, over which he has such authority.

* Psa. lxviii. 20.

† Matt. xvi. 18.

• They are called death and hell. Of the meaning of the first of these terms, death, there is no difficulty; it is the departure of the soul from the body. The other term, hell, has become somewhat obscure because of change in our language, whereby the word which originally signified merely a place unseen, or covered, has come now to be used almost exclusively for that part of the unseen world in which the devil and his angels, and impenitent sinners are punished. The word in its old use and signification is the accurate translation of the original in the passage before us. The hell here meant is the unseen world—the place of separate spirits, the receptacle of the dead, whether righteous or unrighteous. To this hell, or hades, the souls of all men go on departing from the body, and there abide until the resurrection of the last day. Within its confines are included two divisions: one the resting-place of the just, called “Paradise,”* and “Abraham’s bosom;”† and the other the miserable tenement of the wicked, called “Tartarus,”‡ and “the deep” or “the bottomless pit.”§ Over this hades Christ has the key. Into this hell it was that, on his death, Christ’s soul, accordingly as we declare we believe in the creed, departed, and there abode until his resurrection. To this agrees the prediction through the Psalmist in

* Luke xxiii. 43. † Ib. xvi. 22. ‡ 2 Pet. ii. 4.

§ Luke viii. 31; Rev. ix. 1, 2, and xx. 3.

the sixteenth Psalm and tenth verse, saying, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption :" which St. Peter in the second of Acts tells us refers to Christ, of whom David as a prophet foretold, "that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." (verse 31.) Jesus Christ, that he might obtain the keys of the gates of death and hell, stooped to death and went down into hell ; and rising again hath burst those gates, and none can shut them. He thus also fulfilled all the conditions of a man, and as each of us has to undergo death, and our souls depart into hades, we have the consolation of knowing that Jesus Christ has passed through before us, and has returned, opening for us the path of life and resurrection.

When a man expires, his body becomes the prey of death, and his soul, leaving its earthly tenement, enters into the place whither Christ's soul went, that place here called hell. Thus he abides until the time of the resurrection. Of this, Christ's resurrection was the pledge and earnest ; and as first-fruits of his power and intention, he brought with him many of the saints who slept. And this is the promise of Christ to his church, and this is the power which he here claims as his. He can and he will raise from the dead in a glorious manner the bodies of his people, and recall their souls from hades, so that they

shall once more, and for ever, inhabit their bodies, now glorified. Declaring that he had these keys, Jesus announced the same truth in effect, which this apostle has recorded him as teaching, by words, when he said, "I am the resurrection and the life."* When he promises to his church that the gates of hell shall not prevail against her, it is in effect a promise that he, by virtue of these keys of those gates, will open them to his people. This promise may imply, indeed, that a church on earth shall never fail, however distressed, persecuted, or laid waste by death, until the return of Christ; but its primary meaning is, that the gates of hades shall not detain the souls of his people, but that he having opened and passed through those gates, and possessing the keys of them, will call and bring his people thence. Thus their souls shall be delivered from hell, its gates not prevailing to detain them; while, as he has also broken the gates and holds the key of death, neither shall death prevail to detain their bodies; but, soul and body being re-united, they shall triumph over death and hell, even as Christ has already done, and by virtue of his power and triumph. Possessor of the keys of death and hell, it is manifest he has the power to give effect to this his promise.

As Christ has by his death and resurrection obtained and manifested this power, so also his

death and resurrection involve the redemption of his people from the grave and hades. His literal body is a type of his mystical body. "We are "members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones," so that he, in this sense, is not fully risen until "the first resurrection." The head is risen, the members must follow. The head is glorified, the members must partake of his glory ; he shall "change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body."* "Thy dead shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust."† Thus to Christ rising as the forerunner of his people, we may apply the words of Micah, "The breaker is come up before them : they have broken up, and have passed through the gate, and are gone out by it : and their king shall pass before them, and the **LORD** on the head of them." (chap. ii. 13.) When Christ, by this power over death and hell, shall thus have raised up all his mystical body, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory ;" while the believer looking to this glorious event can triumphantly exclaim, "O death, where is thy sting ? O hades, where is thy victory ? The sting of death is sin ; and the strength of sin is the law : but thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."‡

* Phil. iii. 21. † Isa. xxvi. 19. ‡ 1 Cor. xv. 54—57.

Holding these keys, Christ, therefore, is represented to us as possessed of power to give effect to that promise which he gave to the church by the prophet Hosea, saying, “I will ransom them from the power of hades; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; (*I will be thy death,* so the Vulgate;) O hades, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eys.” (chap. xiii. 14.) He has paid the ransom, he has accomplished the redemption, and proved it by raising his own body from death, and bringing his own soul back from hades; and he will be the death of death and the destruction of hades, when he shall, at the last day, cause the dead to hear his voice, and death shall deliver up their bodies, and hades render back their souls, and all shall stand in the resurrection before the judgment-seat of Christ. All this, we find, he shall bring to pass when his feet shall stand in the last day once more on earth. Of this power then exercised, and this promise then put into effect, we have an account in the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, where we read: “Death and hades delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works;” and then it is added, after they have been thus emptied, they shall be destroyed—“death and hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosover was not found written

in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (verses 13—15.)

Thus, at his second coming, Christ shall exercise the power of his keys, opening and emptying the grave and hades, and then destroying them; while the wicked shall be cast into the place of punishment "prepared for the devil and his angels,"—the real hell, as we now for the most part use the word, called "the lake of fire," and "the second death." The first death all must undergo, except those people of God who shall be alive at the second advent of Christ; but Christ has redeemed us from its power, and shall set us free, so that all men shall be raised from the dead in the last day: but from the second death, called by our Lord the destruction of body and soul in hell, those only shall be delivered who by faith are united to Christ, members of his mystical body. They shall be made to triumph and reign with him, but the wicked shall be consigned to sorrow and the continued dominion of the second death. The contrast of the condition of these two classes is strikingly expressed by the Psalmist, saying of the wicked, "Like sheep they are laid in hades, *death shall feed upon them*; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume, *hades being the habitation to every one of them*, (margin.) But God shall redeem my

*soul from the power of hades, for he shall receive me.” **

From the effect of this vision of the Son of man, and the similar effect of the like vision in other cases, while we may learn what a fearful thing it must be to fall into the hands of the living God, yet, from the acts and words of Jesus Christ in these various instances, we may also learn our stay and consolation before God,—even Jesus, “the mediator of the New Testament.” His language is still to the penitent, as it was to his beloved disciple, “Fear not;”—“it is I, be not afraid,” he says to the conscience-stricken and law-condemned; and his word is almighty; the heart and conscience obey him, as did the winds and waves. Through him, his righteousness, sufferings, resurrection, and intercession on high, we may boldly draw near to God. He who bids us “Fear not,” is almighty, even the Eternal One, and therefore we know that he is able to help and defend us; but he has died, and is now risen and lives for evermore, the great Amen, and therefore we know, also, that he has not only ability to save us, but that he has actually wrought out an everlasting salvation for us, and will be faithful to fulfil all his promises unto us. And, finally, his words assure his people of a glorious resurrection through his power. Thus, as St. Paul expresses it, “through death” he hath destroyed

* Psa. xlix. 14, 15.

"him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage."* The "keys of death and of hell" being his, who at the same time is our Saviour, we can enter and pass through the dark valley, fearing no evil, for he is with us who, as our captain and deliverer, has passed the way before us and come victorious out of it. Indeed, it is no longer fearful to the believer. It was dark, and from its bourn no traveller had returned; but such it is no longer, since "Jesus liveth who was dead." He has made bright its darkest recess, shining throughout it as the "Sun of Righteousness," and making it all radiant with the day-spring of the resurrection-morn. He has been there and returned, and has brought us up a report of the land beyond the Jordan; we, therefore, go not to an "undiscovered country," but whither a forerunner has for us entered, and made ready a place of blissful sojourn until the assembly of the just is all collected, the mystery of redemption accomplished, and the trump of God calls forth his host in glorified bodies, to meet and reign with their glorious Redeemer. Thus the believer can sleep in death until his "appointed time," when "the change shall come;" when God shall call, and he shall answer; when God "shall have a desire to the work of his own hands;"† when

* Heb. ii. 14, 15.

† Job xiv. 12—15.

the “Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, and the dead in Christ shall rise” partakers of the resurrection of which it is written : “Blessed and holy is he that hath part: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

May we thus sleep in Jesus, and, “awaking up after his likeness,” for ever be with the Lord !

THE CONCLUSION.

WE have now concluded the part of this Book which we proposed to consider, namely, the things exhibited to the apostle before the revelation of futurity was given to him,—even the appearance of the Son of man in glory amidst his church. We have not exhausted the precious truths that may be found here, but merely endeavoured to bring forth some of the instruction, comfort, and peace, which God has laid up for us in this portion of his word. If to any, in any measure, these have been unfolded, this labour will not have been in vain, and the praise shall be all to God.

The great object of the whole passage is to exalt Jesus in his church, to show that he is as present now to faith, as when on earth he was to sight, and with the same willingness to help and bless as he then manifested; while, also, he is here displayed as possessed of all power, and therefore with ability.

equal to his will to supply all our necessities, and preserve us from every danger. Here Christ is, therefore, exalted as "mighty to save." He is presented to us as the fountain whence flows to his church in an unfailing and uninterrupted stream, all the blessings of the gospel. He is depicted as our priest, king, and prophet, participating with us all that is his. As priest, he wears that robe which is the emblem of his righteousness, wherewith he clothes all them that believe. Clad with it we experience the blessedness that consists in pardoned iniquities, and covered sins. He is in the midst of us, girded with that girdle which is emblematical of his Divine and eternal love,—which love is the pledge of our safety in him. He stands amongst us with the emblem of holiness upon his forehead: in this appearing as the great example to his people, as well as he who works in them conformity to his character.

Do we feel anxious about worldly matters, cast down with earthly sorrows, and forsaken or forgotten? Here, by emblems, we are taught that Christ, full of divine sympathy, is ever with us, and the eye of his watchful care and guidance is ever over us for good, so that we shall not be left or overlooked. We learn, if ourselves called to enter the furnace, that Christ has been in it before us, and that He, Almighty, will be with us in it: so that "when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned;

neither shall the flame kindle upon thee."* He having in our nature suffered, and thus having become experimentally acquainted with the power of temptation and the weakness of our nature, will not suffer us to be tried above what we are able to bear, "but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it."† Thus as our king he rules over us, protects us, guides us, supports us in our conflicts, watches to afford us succour in our hour of need, and brings us off, finally, "more than conquerors."

As our great prophet also he is here, by emblems, represented as ever instructing his church: this he does by a stated ministry and ordinances, and by the holy Scriptures—his Spirit making these efficacious. Let us hearken diligently to his word, use it as the weapon of our Christian warfare, and walk in the light it gives us.

In short, let us recollect that, here Jesus Christ is declared to be God's "beloved son," and therefore our King, to rule us; to be he in whom the Father is "well pleased," and therefore our Priest to save us; to be he whom God commands us "to hear," and therefore our Prophet to teach us. Let us take him as all these to us, and thus we shall experience his guidance through time to eternity, from grace to glory: his comfortable deeds and words shall expel

* Isa. xliv. 2.

† 1 Cor. x. 13.

that fear which perfect love casts out,* and give us peace with God ; and, at the last, having enabled us to triumph over death, he by his power will unlock the gates of the grave and hades, reunite our souls to our bodies, then made meet for the indwelling of redeemed souls, and thus we shall be “kings and priests,” reigning with him for ever and ever!

But if Christ is here displayed as the almighty Saviour of his people, he is also, as we have seen and must never forget, exalted as the Almighty One, who shall overwhelm with fearful and eternal destruction all those who madly continue to be his enemies. All these various emblems of his mercy to his people more or less signify, also, this solemn truth. If he is full of love, righteousness, and holiness, what must be the end of those who are destitute of these qualities? Surely they cannot dwell with him; but in banishment from his presence, which is the source of happiness, they must suffer all misery. His eyes of majesty reach everywhere and behold all; there is no distance that can remove men from his presence, no darkness that can conceal them from his observation; therefore no sinner can fly this holy king. He has power equal to the grasp of his providence, and shall tread down his enemies beneath his feet; and with his sword and word of power, and with the brightness of his presence, he shall destroy with everlasting

* 1 John iv. 18.

destruction all those “that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

May not any who read these pages be of this number! May the power of the Holy Spirit give us to know, to trust in, and to obey Jesus amidst us, our prophet, priest, and king, that thus at his second coming we may be presented “faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.” Amen!

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